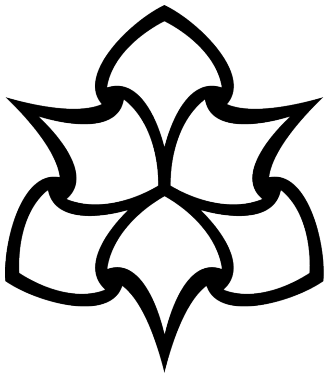

How Higher Education Leaders Learn to Lead – The Shaping of Professional Identities: A Comparison of Senior Academic Leaders in Libya and the UK

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By

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ABSTRACT

The role of senior academic leaders, specifically at the level of dean, in advancing the quality and performance of university education is an important one that has changed in nature over recent decades to become more managerial. This study explores the nature of this role, and how those who are in it develop their professional identities. It begins from the premise that both the characteristics of the role, and the self-images subsequently generated by deans are culture-specific, a belief held by the researcher as an 'insider' within the Libyan Higher Education context.

Consequently, this study undertakes a comparative analysis of the role and professional identity of deans in a Libyan university, and those in a UK university. It adopts a qualitative methodology, using in-depth face-to-face interviews between the researcher, and six deans in each of the two universities. The interview protocol follows the life history approach in which participants are asked to share their stories of their formative years, their early careers, their journey to deanship, their accounts of their roles as deans, and their aspirations for the future. The data are analysed through a three-dimensional theoretical framework which addresses life/career stages, national culture, and the social construction of identity.

It finds that culture and politics are influencers of what is expected of a dean as a senior academic leader, and that the daily lives and professional identities of the two research samples can be differentiated as a result of those two factors, since the formative years of all interviewees were similar and hence, the impact of family upbringing is controlled for. The major difference between the role and professional image of Libyan deans and UK deans, is the pressure from Libyan society, politics, and culture, for the appointment criteria in respect of deanships to relate to factors other than suitability for the job. This leads to a situation where Libyan deans are managerial, implementing regulations made by others further up the hierarchy, and generally having no room to 'lead' in the academic sense. Indeed, they are not given any form of leadership training in preparation for deanship which confirms the intended scope of the role. UK deans enjoy greater freedom in the discharge of their deanships, but nonetheless report being over-burdened by managerial responsibilities which they perceive to distract from their effectiveness as leaders.

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To all my participants both in Libya and the UK whom I cannot name for reasons of confidentiality, I am thankful beyond words for taking me into their confidence and being so willing to share their personal and professional stories with me.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the soul of my father for his invaluable contribution towards my success, and to my beloved mother for her endless support and prayers. I also dedicate this work to my wife for her encouragement, understanding and patience, and to my sons Adam and Suhaib. Without you all, this journey would not have been possible.

Figures and Tables

Figures

Tables

List of Abbreviations

CUC	Committee of University Chairs
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IBM	International Business Machine
LD	Libyan Dean
UKD	United Kingdom Dean
MHE&SR	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Issue

Effective leadership in Higher Education is considered to be fundamental to the advancement of HE organisations (Bolden et al., 2008: Richards, 2016). Moreover, such effectiveness in the discharge of leadership abilities is not only required of those in top leadership positions within universities and colleges, but also of individuals with less authority and power but who, nevertheless, operate in leadership roles of differing strength, throughout HEIs. Indeed, it is argued that it is sensible to disseminate leadership responsibility in HEIs and to cascade this down the academic hierarchy (Bolden et al., 2012; Ramsden, 1998), such that individuals with responsibility for modules, years of a course, full programmes, schools, and deans for example, become adept at leading the educational enterprise. In recognition of this desirability, there has been an explosion of advice within the literature and from practitioner and professional organisations about how to lead well, and what constitutes a good leader (Busher, 2005; Floyd, 2012). All of this intellectual effort and practical guidance emphasises the need for preparation for the role of leader, whether that be through formal programmes or periods of apprenticeship in supervisory positions of some kind.

However, my professional experience as an academic leader in a Libyan HEI (head of department for four years, and a dean for one year) has made it plain to me that within the Libyan context, there are many inefficiencies, that deans in Libya find it hard to discharge their role, to persuade subordinates to be innovative and step outside of the box, and in some instances, to realise any co-operation at all from them. This personal experience of being a dean has highlighted the difficulties encountered in Libyan HEIs, since the task of managing a faculty of 50 academic staff and 55 administrative staff as a senior leader is one that I have actually had to manage. It illuminated the need for effective communication skills as essentially, the dean operates in the role of buffer between heads of department, and top management of the university (university president), and involves not only the chairmanship of many formal meetings, but the management of endless informal attempts to secure co-operation. The types of problem that arise for deans undoubtedly serve to prevent the necessary curriculum development

in Libyan HE, and hence, have a negative influence upon efforts to promote national capability among Libyan youth.

Having had the opportunity to teach in a university in America where I also had to conduct many meetings and operate in a leadership position, it is clear to me that differences in leadership practice exist within these two contexts, and those differences seem to be influenced by socialisation, culture, and the particular organisation involved. Consequently, there are questions to be asked surrounding these variables, to establish for example, how leaders find themselves in their roles, whether they have had any preparation, in which respect life history becomes important, how their identities as leaders have emerged, and to what extent their cultural context has provided encouragement, strong direction or otherwise.

The lack of knowledge and understanding about such matters represents the main issue of this inquiry.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

As indicated, leadership in Libyan HEIs is not as effective as it could be, and the brake on curriculum development brought about by this limitation is a serious matter for the country. Libya's history has been turbulent, and contemporary times since the 2011 Revolution have brought even more instability as civil unrest prevails. In such a scenario, efforts to re-construct major institutions including those providing Higher Education, need to be the most robust possible. Consequently, there is a genuine need to instil within Libyan universities, a degree of professionalism and empowerment among those with leadership roles. However, because of the lack of research into this specific area, predominantly because of the civil strife and the fact that under the four-decade long Qadafi regime, issues of leadership were not encouraged as discussion topics, there is no literature whatsoever, on the issue of how those in academic leadership positions do actually lead, how they perceive themselves in that professional capacity, and whether they receive any kind of preparation for those roles.

This dearth of literature means that no theoretical frameworks other than those developed in Western contexts, exist as a means of exploring how senior educationalists within Libyan HEIs discharge their leadership responsibilities, and indeed what responsibilities such individuals believe they have as leaders. Consequently, it is

necessary to formulate some kind of conceptual model to allow an investigation into that issue to proceed. In this respect, existing theories and experience from Western institutions must be taken as a foundation on which to build.

Justified, therefore, by the poor quality of leadership in Libyan universities, and the need for Libyan HEIs to advance in order to enhance the national capability, this study is conducted with the following aims, and objectives.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

Given the statement of the issue, and the rationale expressed for pursuing an investigation relating to the problem, the overall aim of the study can be seen as being to conduct a comparative examination of how senior academic leaders, and in particular deans, from the two different cultural contexts of Libya and the UK, develop their identity as leaders, and discharge their roles. From this wide aim, five specific objectives are created as follows:

- To explore the literature relating to leadership with a view to determining the factors and personal characteristics that are influential in producing effective leaders.
- To explore empirically, the extent to which the life history of senior academic leaders in Libyan and UK universities influences the way they develop leadership skills and eventually lead.
- To determine what senior academic leaders actually do in Libyan and UK universities, and the extent to which those leaders are satisfied with their role.
- To establish differences between the level of preparation, and therefore, effectiveness in respect of senior academic leaders in Libyan and UK universities.
- To establish how the professional identity of senior academic leaders in Libyan and UK universities emerges, and what influences are brought to bear on this identity by life history, and national culture.

These objectives are underpinned by several ideas, the first being that if life history does function as an antecedent of effective leadership behaviour, then people who have experienced a revolutionary existence of the kind imposed by Qadafi, will demonstrate

life histories that are out of synchronisation with those of individuals who have not experienced life in a society where political expression has been banned. The second is that the professionalism associated with academic leadership should be capable of transferring to different environments in the hope that standards of Higher Education in universities in developing countries can be raised to meet those that have evolved over many years in the more advanced countries, and that similar opportunities for national capability can be gained. And the third is that different national environments are characterised by variations, sharp or nuanced, in culture and that these predispose different behavioural responses to leadership.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the above objectives, two research questions have been developed, as follows:

1- How does life history affect academic leadership?

This question was designed to clarify each senior leader's journey to deanship, how each one's experiences helped them to become deans, and how these experiences influenced their leadership style. It is assumed that the answers to this question will implicitly highlight issues of culture, societal expectation, and behavioural predispositions.

2- What shapes the professional identity of senior academic leaders?
   - What is involved in being a dean?
   - How do deans perceive themselves?
   - How do deans perceive others?

This question and its sub-questions were designed to establish how those senior leaders' identities were constructed, the significance of their experience in shaping their identities, and the visions they now possess of their own professional identity, and that of others. It is assumed that the answers to these questions will also be underpinned by cultural predispositions as well as organisational imperatives.

1.5 Proposed Methodology

In order to obtain answers to the above research questions, and thereby achieve the aim and objectives of the study, a methodology is chosen that involves the collection of both secondary data, from existing literature, and primary data obtained through an empirical

exercise with a sample of deans in Libya, and the UK. The data gathered will therefore, enable a comparative study such that differences and similarities in the role of dean within the two different cultural environments can be identified, and pointers given where it is possible to make changes for the better.

In respect of the literature, four distinct bodies of knowledge are reviewed, these being: leadership (general and within the context of HE), life history theory, national culture, and social identity.

The scholarship on leadership theory shows that when considering the role of dean, it must be acknowledged that this varies extensively dependent upon faculty, institution, and the country where the university is located (Boer and Goedegebuure, 2009).

Life history theory, on the other hand (Parker, 2002; Traffinder, 1995) suggests that individuals pass through certain stages in their lives and that these can be seen to be important in the context of leading others (Inman, 2007; Ribbins, 2003; Gronn, 1999; Day and Bakioglu). In this connection, this study takes account of both the life experience, and the interpretation of that experience, believing both to be of crucial importance. Through telling their stories, individuals reveal how their "lives are affected by when, where, how and by whom (in social positioning terms) they are lived" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001:4), and this approach is important especially when comparing research samples in different cultures that are arguably at different developmental stages.

And the theory on national culture (Hofstede, 1980), and professional identity through the mechanism of Figured Worlds (Holland et al., 1998) consider the behavioural predispositions generated by cultural expectations of particular societies, and by social interaction with people operating in the same general orbit. These two theories acknowledge that individuals do not accumulate their identities in a vacuum, but rather do so as members of groups which function to transit certain beliefs, values and behavioural norms, all of which support growing predispositions to lead or follow (Mortimer and Simmons (1978). They emphasise the influence of different socialisation experiences over time (Floyd, 2012), and that as people operate in their respective, small worlds, they come to 'figure out' who they are (Urrieta Jr, 2007), and that they continuously reform their identities according to their social circles, and over time (Creaby, 2016; Holland et al., 1998).

Underpinning the empirical aspect of the study with the above-mentioned literature, a qualitative approach is chosen in which personal interviews on a one-to-one basis with six deans from each of two universities, one in the west of Libya, and one in the north west of England, are conducted, essentially to obtain their life histories. This method is chosen since as observed by Goodson and Sikes (2001), it is the most common strategy for gathering life history data - the rich data to be obtained from this empirical fieldwork. Moreover, as a dean himself, and hence an 'insider', the researcher expects to this data to be offered in a collaborative spirit, and thus to be even more insightful. Data are analysed using a thematic approach in which patterns are identified (Braun and Clarke, 2006), allowing for theories to be proposed (Riessman, 2005) relating to the leadership phenomenon as observed in the two research settings (Libyan and UK universities). The participants are asked to reflect on the same thing - their life histories, their lived experience, their 'figured worlds', and how their professional identity has been shaped by these. The three distinct yet inextricably linked theoretical bases of life history, culture, and professional identity through figured worlds serve as the conceptual underpinnings for the interpretation of the data, and as a means of illuminating similarities and differences between the two research samples.

1.6 Proposed Contribution to Knowledge

The study makes three major contributions to knowledge. Firstly, it adds to the sparse literature on the condition of Libyan HE generally in the post-Revolution (2011) environment, and makes a unique contribution specifically in relation to leadership at the level of dean. Secondly, whilst Libya is in a very special situation in respect of the civil unrest currently being experienced, it nonetheless shares many features characteristic of other Arab and Islamic societies, and consequently, the findings also make a contribution to the wider literature of the Arab World. Thirdly, it adds to the large body of literature relating to academic leadership in the West, through its inclusion of the UK sample.

Finally, the study offers a practical contribution by providing guidance for the improvement of leadership in Libyan HEIs, taking account of cultural and social predispositions that might operate to hinder this.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of six chapters.

Chapter One has provided an introduction to the study, outlining the particular issue as perceived by the researcher, presenting a justification for conducting the study, indicating a clear aim and objectives, and articulating two research questions and sub-questions designed to achieve the aim and objectives. It has discussed the methodology to be adopted to further the research, commenting on the sample to be used and the means of data analysis. Finally, it has given some insight into the expected contributions to knowledge, before outlining the structure of the thesis.

Chapter Two focuses on the concept of leadership, providing clarification between leadership and management, and situating the notion of leadership within the HE context in both Libya and UK. To assist the reader, more detailed information about Libya is provided in Appendices three and four. Thereafter the chapter discusses the theory pertaining to Life History/Stages, National Culture, and the theory of Figured Worlds (as a means of developing professional identity).

Chapter Three presents the methodology employed to pursue the empirical study of the senior academic leaders in Libya and the UK. It reports on the philosophical stance which underpins the methods adopted, and the research approach, which in keeping with the interpretivist underpinning, is a qualitative one. A description of the in-depth interview, and the sampling method employed follows. The piloting process is then discussed before reporting on how the actual interviews were conducted. Issues relating to the data analysis are discussed, as also are those concerning validity and reliability, and the ethical considerations borne in mind in executing the fieldwork.

Chapter Four focuses on the data, and begins by producing pen portraits of the twelve interviewees as a means of grounding the data in the two different cultural contexts of Libyan and UK universities. The data from the UK, and Libya, are then introduced separately to highlight the similarities and differences in respect of their responses to the two main and subsidiary research questions. Specifically, these relate to how life history affects academic leadership through their formative years, and career and leadership roles, and to what shapes their professional identity.

Chapter Five presents a discussion of the findings and in doing so it considers each of the two research questions separately referring to both the UK and the Libyan together to facilitate a simultaneous treatment that facilitates the comparison of the two research

samples. Through the comparison of data in respect of each of the research questions, the essential differences between the Libyan and UK deans are highlighted.

Chapter Six provides a conclusion to the study and makes recommendations. Additionally, it acknowledged limitations of the research where they occur, but also points to the contributions which it makes to knowledge and to practice. Some suggestions relating to how the study might be used as a springboard for additional research, before the thesis finishes with a personal note from the researcher.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As presented in Chapter One, the ultimate goal of this study is to examine the leadership skills possessed by senior leaders in Higher Education (HE) in both Libya, and the UK, and to establish leaders' perceptions of how they developed their leadership abilities, and what shaped their professional identities. In this examination, the study explores whether senior leaders identify themselves specifically as leaders or managers, and how such identification influences their behaviour. This leads to a discussion of how these leaders perceive their approaches to leadership because, as stated by Parker (2002), the way we work and lead depends, to an important extent, on who we are and what we have become, which, in turn, is a result of what we have been. In fact, this is crucial because effective leadership is considered to be the outcome of a lifelong process of learning and development (Spillane et al., 2001).

Consequently, the concept of leadership is integral to the thesis, and this chapter provides a theoretical underpinning by examining several aspects of leadership. Firstly, Section 2.2, provides clarification of the difference between leadership and management, if indeed any such difference exists, as this in itself remains a subject of debate. Secondly, in Section 2.3, the concept of leadership in the context of higher education (HE) in the UK and in Libya is discussed, highlighting the way in which HE organisations are governed and led in both countries. In Section 2.4, the theoretical framework associated with the Life History/Stages approach is presented, as a partial underpinning of the empirical exercise conducted with deans to determine why and how individuals become leaders. Specifically, the models proposed by Day and Bakioglu (1996), Gronn (1999), Ribbins (2003), and Inman (2007) are reviewed, and the importance of the stages of leadership development are identified. Section 2.5 introduces the particular framework proposed by Hofstede (1980) as a way of understanding national character. This discussion is offered in the belief that the Life History/Stages approach to the analysis of data makes no sense if the cultural context of those reporting their stories is not also appreciated. In Section 2.6, a logical progression from discussions of Life History/Stages to Cultural Dimensions, is provided through a consideration of how professional identity is born, and how individuals figure their own

worlds. The theory is presented to offer an overall conceptual approach to the analysis of data that involves the combined use of three different but inextricably linked models to help explain the leadership issues that are the focus of this research study. The chapter ends with a summary, provided in Section 2.7.

2.2 Conceptual Analysis of Leadership: Leadership or Management?

The literature on educational leadership includes the word 'management' repeatedly, giving an impression that the two are inextricably linked. Indeed, Crawford (2014) observes the usefulness of the discursive interplay between the terms when it comes to the functioning of organisations. However, there are others who believe that "leadership and management are not interchangeable concepts" (Foster, 1989:57). Consequently, in relation to this thesis, it is important to explore this issue further and across the two settings for the study.

In terms of differentiating between leadership and management, there are strong arguments that suggest each involves different activities. West-Burnham, as cited in Bollington (1999:156), for example, hypothesises that leading is concerned with 'vision', 'strategic issues', 'transformation', 'ends', 'people', and 'doing the right thing'; managing on the other hand, is concerned with 'implementation', 'operational issues', 'transaction', 'means', 'systems', and 'doing things right'. Another way of distinguishing these two concepts is by reference to time frames, since management is normally connected to present activities such as resolving difficulties, organising and decision-making, whilst leadership is associated with vision and future plans. In other words, management is "something more tangible and visible" and leadership is "concerned with vision and influencing the future" (Jones and Pound, 2008:8). Therefore, leaders usually adopt longer-term thinking, they concentrate on what the future might or should look like, and where their organisation will be in a few years' time.

An alternative way to demarcate between leadership and management is to refer to behaviour. In this respect, Gunbayi (2005:685-686) claims that "a manager is a person who directs the work of employees and who is responsible for results; that is, managers ensure that employees reach goals by controlling their behaviours: monitoring results and noting deviations from plans. A leader, by contrast, inspires employees with a

vision and helps them cope with change". Harris (2006) supports Gunbayi's position, observing that leaders usually concentrate on what to do to accomplish their vision, whereas managers are more interested in the way in which things are achieved. Managers are often viewed as less cerebral and creative than leaders, being more concerned with the functioning of organisations rather than the decisions regarding the values which the organisation seeks to embody, and this carries the implication that management is of lesser worth than leadership (Western, 2013).

Nonetheless, despite the long debate and the different interpretations that can be made of 'management' and 'leadership', it is important to make clear that there is no implicit downgrading of management as compared with leadership, in this thesis. Indeed, there is absolute recognition of the vitality of management in HE organisations, and in leadership identity. Certainly, Bush (2011), Kotter (1990), Fullan (2001), and Northouse (2016), all confirm the need for the same degree of importance to be granted to management as to leadership in order to operate efficaciously and accomplish organisational aims. Accordingly, managers and leaders are key people in any educational organisation not only as individuals, but as teams. In support of this suggestion, Harris (2006:82) advises "if you see yourself as a leader type, you should consider partnering with someone who is a strong manager. And if you see yourself as a manager type, you should consider partnering with a strong leader". These comments certainly reflect the requirement for both leadership and management in educational organisations, but the suggestion of the need for partnering to acquire the skills and abilities not possessed by either the 'leader type' or the 'strong manager' misses the point that individuals who possess leadership skills may also possess good management skills. What Harris (2006) seems to be erroneously arguing is that leadership and management are distinct activities that cannot be embodied in one individual, whereas in reality leaders often manage, and managers often lead. The acceptance of this situation suggests therefore, that leadership and management might be placed at two ends of a continuum and that it is quite possible that in the middle of that spectrum is an individual who fluctuates between both leadership and management according to the tasks in hand.

However, even focusing on one end of that continuum and addressing the supposed uncomplicated issue of leadership, it can be seen that the concept is interpreted differently according to who is analysing it (Western, 2013). Western (2013) compares

leadership with beauty, believing it to be in the eye of the beholder, and recognised when it is seen. Consequently, it will be approached differently by different individuals, and certainly where those individuals come from divergent cultures, there is the potential for much variation in perception. Bryant (1998), for example revealed that Western models of leadership are by no means universal as his study of Native American culture found obvious contradictions in what it, and Western culture considered to be ethical, with nepotism providing a case in point. In the latter, there is no place for nepotism, but Native Americans perceive no problem with the transmission of leadership positions through families. In this connection, the observation by Bush and Coleman (2000:18) that "inequalities of power, the importance of the individual, the nature of gender roles and tolerance of uncertainty" are important factors in coming to understand how leadership and the roles of leaders are conceived, rings true, as indeed will be seen in more detail in the later discussion within this literature review of the ideas expressed by Hofstede (1980) on national culture.

What can be gleaned from such an analysis is that leadership is something to do with power, invested in a person, irrespective of whether or not that is a rational decision. Management on the other hand is perceived as something much more rationally determined, defined by Daft (2014:6) as "the attainment of organizational goals in an effective and efficient manner through planning, organizing, leading, and controlling organizational resources". And Drucker (2006) echoes these rational ideas as he speaks of management aiming to develop people, to make them capable, to provide them with common goals and encourage shared values so they can perform well and be sufficiently skilled to be able to respond to change. In this conception of management, it can be seen that some slight benevolence is present, whereas in the conception of leadership referred to earlier, there is no such suggestion. These two characterisations must therefore, lie at opposite ends of the spectrum, in which respect it is not difficult to distinguish between the two.

However, in the context of leading and managing of a modern Western organisation, the task of differentiating between management and leadership is a complex one, and it would seem that finding a definition of the two terms that satisfies all writers is problematic, since some suggest there is no difference between them, whereas others believe there is, but that this is essential rhetorical. A third view is that there is a difference but that nonetheless, the two concepts remain related in one way or another,

and that they are both equally necessary in organisations, although they are always likely to be in a state of dynamic tension (Creaby, 2016), not least because some leadership decisions (like the one to introduce a new module in a programme in response to developments in a subject discipline) may run counter to managerial imperatives (to operate within the staffing budget), and vice versa. None of the positions advanced, however, presents any argument that whatever the similarities or differences between leadership and management, there is any logical reason why the same person cannot develop the knowledge and skill to perform both functions. Clearly in such a position, an individual is bestowed with a substantial amount of power, rationalised by the organisation and thereby placing all others in a subordinate relationship to the leader/manager-manager/leader.

2.3 Leadership in the Context of Higher Education in the UK and Libya

In the West the rhetoric about organisational improvement being supported by good leadership has resulted in an explosion of advice concerning how to lead well, and what constitutes a good leader. There is also a broader belief that effective leadership in HE – that which can encourage all stakeholders to internalise the HE mission - is at the core of the success of the organisations involved (Bolden et al., 2008) Browne and Rayner, 2015), and "the absence of leadership is often seen as the absence of organization" (Smircich and Morgan, 1982:257). This success is not due only to those in the higher ranks of HEIs, but to individuals with less authority and power but who nonetheless adopt leadership roles of varying strength, throughout the HE institution. The point is made in this connection by Bolden et al. (2012) that it is not advisable to concentrate leadership responsibility in just a few individuals within universities, and that all lecturers have such responsibility albeit in varying degrees. Hence, leadership is relevant to everyone at all levels (Ramsden, 1998), being visible in the academic leadership brought to bear by module leaders, year tutors, etc.

Since Libyan and UK HE form the focus of this study, it is essential to shed light on the nature of leadership in these two environments, and in this connection it can be said that the Libyan tradition is to perceive leadership as management, to believe that there is no genuine difference between the two, whilst that tendency is much less prevalent in the UK. These beliefs and general attitudes towards leadership and management in Libya are characteristically different from those in the UK and are explained in total by the fact that the long-ruling political regime of the past, and the centrally-driven edicts

concerning all aspects of social life, have stifled academic debate, with the outcome that there is little historical literature of any worth on the topic of leadership in the Libyan HE sector, and only a small amount of emerging commentary from academics. Leadership, therefore, does not feature as a discreet concept in academic literature in Libya. Consequently, a clear overview of how Libya's HEIs are actually governed must first be established, as this influences the day-to-day operational aspects of leadership.

2.3.1 Libyan Experiences of HEI Leadership and Management

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHE&SR) is the body responsible for delivering this tier of education, and it discharges this obligation through delegated authority to three other bodies, these being: the Administration for Universities, the National Foundation for Technical and Vocational Education, and the Administration for Private Education. Together, these three arms of the MHE&SR take responsibility for the supervision of HEIs and for ensuring co-ordination between them, a task which is executed through a regulatory framework.

At the level of the individual university, the chairman is responsible for overall management and academic decision-making, with deans assuming a leadership role at the faculty level, that being to guide the faculty to the achievement of its educational objectives. University committees are comprised of the deputies of the chairman, the deans of faculties, and two representatives, one each from the student body, and the university staff union. At the level of the faculty, these committees comprise the heads of departments, and again a representative of the student body, and another representative of the faculty staff union. Academic staff are appointed and promoted by universities themselves, and the curricula delivered within the universities are also internally approved. The universities must implement the general policy relating to HE as dictated by the MHE&SR, and this applies throughout the university hierarchy (institution, faculty, and department level). The MHE&SR plays the major role in appointing university chairmen and their deputies as they make recommendations in this respect, and appointments are then secured through a Cabinet decree. Lower down the hierarchy, the MHE&SR is the absolute decision-maker, as it is responsible for appointing deans of faculty in universities, and deans in technical colleges.

It can thus be appreciated, that a definite process has been established for the positioning of personnel within the various levels of the Libyan HE sector, but in the day-to-day operation of Libyan HEIs, there is no such regulatory framework leading to consistency in management practice, and currently, Libyan HE faces a significant number of challenges as noted by several researchers, see for example, Al-Howat (1996); Theeb (2009); Tarhoni (2011). These challenges exist despite the increased number of universities in both the public and private sectors, and the obvious availability of places for students within the overall system, and as observed by Tamtam et al. (2011), only a few research studies have focused on these challenges.

One challenge that is pinpointed by all researchers is the lack of management and leadership evident in institutions, and this results in the absence of any clear vision and aims within the HE system generally. Tamtam et al. (2011), for instance, state that Libyan HEIs suffer from the absence of strategic planning, and consequently focus on short-term operational objectives at the expense of long-term educational goals. They also emphasise that there is a problem within most HEIs concerning the selection of individuals for leadership roles since there are no criteria in place for this activity, and consequently, there is a need to develop appropriate selection criteria such that academic leaders with the ability to direct and mould the future of HE can be appointed and properly trained. In terms of training, Tamtam et al. (2011) mention that faculty members are not supported by training and development initiatives that would enable them to participate in academic life for the betterment of the system.

It is clear from an understanding of the governing bodies of Libyan HE, that the system is highly centralised. This heavy reliance on centralisation, as cited by Theeb (2009), is also seen through the Supreme Council of Universities, and within individual university administrations, which result in the inability of faculties to manage their own affairs and the subsequent delays in the overall educational process. Such delays, it could be suggested, promote a loss of work-hours and adversely affect performance as the ability to make timely decisions is denied. Hence, delays both in academic matters and general administration are endemic in the overall system.

Undoubtedly, the Libyan HE management system is bureaucratic, a characteristic noted by Al-Howat (1996), who criticised it as being bureaucratic and manual, observing at the same time that even with the very large increases in student numbers, administration was still undertaken manually (i.e., using pens, paper, and files), rather than through the use of new technologies, which would enable swifter communication, and decision-

making. Indeed, Al-Howat (1996) offered an example of a simple letter taking a week to travel from a university's administration office to a department, despite the physical distance between these two places being only 300 metres. That situation has not changed. Very recently, Aboajela (2015) also related the Libyan management system in all organisations to bureaucracy. Therefore, Theeb (2009) suggests that a crucial and strategic goal for HE is the development of an integrated management system which allows for the enhancement of co-ordination between the ministers concerned, HEIs and universities, to ensure that appropriate decisions are taken and done so in a timely manner, all of which will lead to progress in the HE system nationally.

A consideration of the background to the current management problems within Libyan HE provides some understanding of how such difficulties have arisen over the years. Specifically, under the previous political regime, there was interference in most organisations by Qadafi, despite the fact that legally he was not authorised to comment. Indeed, the instructions contained within Qadafi's speeches were considered as orders to be followed, even when they diverged from existing laws and resolutions. One good example of this occurred in a particular session of the General People's Congress in 2010, when Qadafi took the unilateral decision to abolish the death penalty for certain people who had committed crimes (murders), irrespective of the decisions that had been made previously by the Minister of Justice; and another example occurred when, during his visit to the Faculty of Medicine, he upheld complaints made by some students who had been denied entry to the Faculty because of their low scores, and instructed that even low-scoring students could enter any faculty including Medicine, despite the regulations requiring high scores. These are only two examples of many interventions by the regime's leader and the fact that no person was able to criticise. These interferences clearly had a marked impact on the management systems in all organisations where they occurred, as they could happen at any time, and anywhere. What is more surprising is that all such decisions were taken at the time of the speech, without being preceded by any investigation or research. Consequently, there was no evidence to suggest they would have beneficial outcomes. In fact, as history shows, the opposite resulted.

At the faculty level, it is clear that senior leaders face the outcomes of the frequent policy changes, and that this involves their inability to discharge their roles effectively, as external interventions prevent continuity of operation and deans find themselves having to react to such change rather than being able to plan for educational

developments that are logical for their subject areas. Hence, it can be argued, and I believe it to be the case from my own experience as a dean, an issue that I will examine within the methodology chapter, that the obligations placed upon senior leaders in university faculties in Libya, lean more towards those of management than leadership. Essentially, these leaders have functioned purely to implement the policies and regulations dictated by committees further up the political hierarchy, and to abide by impromptu changes imposed as a result of changes requested by Qadafi. Moreover, it is important to note, as indicated earlier, that the MHE&SR with its authority to appoint such personnel was always at the behest of Qadafi, with the result that no appointments were ever made which did not have his seal of approval, and that were conferred on the basis that the individuals in question showed allegiance to his political philosophy. Consequently, the situation arose that those in senior leadership and higher positions found their way into those jobs irrespective of whether they possessed the skills, abilities, and qualifications to discharge the responsibilities associated with them. Basically, such appointments were political. Likewise, the entire HE system has historically been the creation of, and a response to, the political regime, and hence has been characterised by interference and control from the centre.

2.3.2 UK Experiences of HEI Leadership and Management

In contrast to Libya, leadership in UK HEIs demands special skills, attitudes, and indeed the ability to operate with a large amount of academic freedom. There is an expectation on the part of UK senior academic leaders that they will be able to enjoy the freedom to use their initiative, and contribute towards the development of their institution. Such freedom is enshrined in the Higher Education Code of Governance 2014, which offers a support to universities' governing bodies. In itself, the Code was developed on the basis of broad consultation with members of the Committee of University Chairs (CUC), and HE stakeholders, and has three parts to it. The first presents the core values that underpin HE governance, the second is the identification of the seven primary elements of governance that support those values, and the third provides guidance to governing bodies in terms of how they should implement the primary elements. The CUC website (www.universitychairs.ac.uk) is a valuable resource to which governing bodies can refer for information and insight into how HEIs are rising to governance challenges. Essentially it operates as a store of best practice. In respect of individual universities, they are governed by their own governing bodies,

Clerk to the Board, Vice-Chancellor, and senior management team. Public adherence by these governance components, to the HE Code of Governance is a visible sign that they are implementing good leadership and stewardship within their respective universities. It is also a sign to the international market and society in general, that universities are being managed appropriately and providing curricula that are suitable.

In this context of compliance with the HE Code of Governance, UK HEIs are able to exercise freedom, as shown in the differences across universities in the type of leadership approaches adopted. Distributed leadership, for instance, has been identified by many researchers (see Bryman, 2007; Gronn, 2013; Jones et al., 2012) to be favoured in the UK university context. Indeed in a study of 12 UK universities undertaken by Bolden et al. (2008), it emerged that in most of these, distributed leadership was preferred. The reasoning behind such a preference is quite simply that, as argued by Bolden et al. (2008), the leadership function is far too important to be given only to individuals formally appointed to leadership roles, and should be distributed at all levels throughout the organisation, although there is no suggestion that leadership roles should be of the same size for all lecturers. Indeed, levels of expertise will determine the extent to which any teaching staff member can assume leadership for his/her module/programme/curriculum development. This applies to both strategic and operational matters. In fact, Jones et al. (2012) argue that the very character of universities makes them resist managerial or hierarchical models of leadership, and that these organisations are much more suited to a style of leadership in which responsibility is shared. This suggestion echoes that made over a decade earlier by Ramsden (1998:4) who believes that "leadership in universities should be by everyone from the Vice Chancellor to the casual car parking attendant, leadership is to do with how people relate to each other".

Clearly, vice chancellors are ultimately responsible for providing leadership, but as found in a study by Bosetti and Walker (2010) who explored the opinion of ten UK university vice-chancellors in respect of the issues of providing leadership, these vice-chancellors firmly believed that the participation of other less senior members of staff was essential. In fact, once again, recent research reflects the same ideas expressed two decades earlier, since Gardner (1995:152) observed that "the only hope for vitality in large-scale organisations is the willingness of a great many people throughout the organisation to take the initiative in identifying problems and solving them". It is also believed that individuals will participate in this respect, since as argued by Gilbert

(2000:38), all leaders within universities are aware of the contribution made by HE to the national social and economic advancement, and consequently strive to ensure "that the best and most precious of what the university has always stood for, is not lost in the face of the brave new, essentially pragmatic world of education in the global knowledge economy".

From the foregoing discussion about leadership in the Libyan and UK HE sectors, it can be inferred that in the Libyan context, this is highly centralised and the policy to be implemented by educational leaders is subject to constant change by the MHE&SR. This is a tradition that has built up over many years of political dictatorship and intervention. In respect of the role of faculty leader, Libyans find themselves performing more as managers than leaders as they do no more than implement the regulations established by the MHE&SR. This heavily centralised approach results in all universities being led (managed) in the same way, and that of course, implies that all the organisational tiers (e.g. faculties) are also managed identically.

Leadership in UK HE, however, varies between universities, and even between faculties within the same institution. It would seem that this variation gives senior leaders an opportunity to create an appropriate environment in which to achieve faculty goals. It also provides them with more room to cope with the changing context and growing expectations as each faculty has its own identity, responsibilities, and roles, (McCormack et al., 2014).

2.4 Life History Stages and their Importance for Leadership Development

Exploring the relevance of life history as an approach in terms of identifying how much of what leaders do is learned and taught, and how could this impact upon the way leaders lead is important. Consequently, the following discussion turns to this issue. It is worth mentioning that some researchers such as Parker (2002), Inman (2014), Briggs (2007) and De Boer and Goedegebuure (2009) believe life history to play a vital role in developing leaders' professional abilities, as this history is crucial "in developing moral values and attributes" (Parker, 2002:10). Taffinder (1995:36) also argued for the value of history, observing that leadership is "about experience, about failure and knowing yourself". It can, therefore, be appreciated that life history can impact on the potential to become an effective leader. In fact, Dimmock and O'Donoghue (2005:173) assert that:

> "given the objective of encouraging every principal, it is imperative that individuals' current state of knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as the significance and relevant events in their life histories and past experiences, be acknowledged as key filters and lenses through which meanings of best practices and principles are distilled".

Hence, it can be understood that the way in which leaders operate is dependent upon all the experiences they have accumulated in their lives.

In connection with past experiences, Usher (1998) divided life history into two types: the life lived story, and the life told story. The first is about what takes place and contains "images, feelings, sentiments, desires, thoughts and meanings known to the person whose life it is" (ibid:57). This life lived story, according to Brundrett et al. (2003), is a dynamic construction of the participant's perception of his/her life. There is no best or correct construction in this respect, as the perception is dependent upon the interpretation of the story at a particular time, and how this is best portrayed to the interviewer. The life told story, on the other hand, is a life history that is descriptive and controlled by cultural beliefs, audience and public context. In this work, both life lived, and life told stories, are adopted since they come through in the same piece of narration and are in fact intertwined, quite possibly to the extent that the boundaries between the objective truth and the subjective truth become blurred.

As an attempt to understand the professional development of educational principals, Kelchtermans (1993) suggests a life history approach which concentrates on private insight and subjective connotation of experiences. He argues that "professional development can only be understood properly if it is conceived of as a result in a life-long process of learning and development" (ibid:443). This approach was also mentioned in Oleson's (2001) work entitled The Journey to Leadership for Academics in Higher Education. Oleson (2001) believes that applying this method helps to "see the social institutions and discourses from below and social practice - but also to see the subjective contribution of the learning persons to the profession and its development" (ibid:296).

Likewise, Inman (2011) suggests that life history studies show that leaders extend their vision and morals throughout their experience during life and that this experience continues to influence and shape the way that leaders lead. She points out that "life history is not to seek generalizations but to seek enlightenment for both individual and

reader for consideration and possible application when developing themselves and others" (ibid:42). The implication of this observation is that such 'enlightenment' should serve as insights into very particular experiences that can be drawn upon and used as stepping stones to new ones, and hence, further development. On an associated theme, Gronn (1999:32) believes that "all leaders are born at a time which is not of their own choosing, and that they live for the bulk of their early formative years and beyond in civil societies within nation-state boundaries in which they are socialized according to cultural assumptions and values which, once again, are overwhelmingly not of their choosing". Consequently, there is a need for leaders to gain the enlightenment spoken about by Inman (2011), such that they are able, through reflection upon their formative years, to critically analyse how much of their true selves surfaced in that period of socialisation, and whether the expectations of their leadership potential were genuinely theirs or thrust upon them by others.

Gronn (1999) provides an interesting framework from which to view a leadership career. He suggests that leaders progress during four phases of time: formation, accession, incumbency, and divestiture. Formation refers to the period of time from birth to adulthood and which is influenced by parents, schools, and peers. These principal institutions help in the shaping and "scaffolding of a character structure" (ibid:32-33), and when reflecting on that part of life history, individuals do identify this as a formative period. The second stage is accession. This is the time when leaders gain experience in different aspects along with different sorts of skills. Gronn (1999:34-36) defines this period as "a stage of grooming or anticipation in which candidates for leadership roles rehearse or test their potential capacity to lead by direct comparison with existing leaders and the field of their prospective rivals for advancement". He also considers it a very important period of time for leadership candidates who are motivated for jobs, suggesting "if the prospect of being a leader becomes particularly enticing at this time they may even begin searching systematically for positions by scanning advertisements, putting out feelers, taking soundings or by networking" (ibid:38). Incumbency is the third stage that leaders go through. Once leaders have reached this point, they have advanced their leadership communication skills and "learned to project their authoritativeness", and consequently, "if they happen to be leaders who hold down formal appointments then … they will likely have undergone and survived both formal and informal induction into their new responsibilities" (ibid:38). The final phase is divestiture. Because of special circumstances such as becoming old, poor health and

incapability, leaders might lose their "psychological grip" (ibid:39) and in this situation, they have to voluntarily stop leading by retiring or resigning and allowing someone else to take charge of the decision-making. In either circumstance, the leader might incur negative feelings, which Gronn believes are "akin to grief" (ibid:40).

In a study by Day and Bakioglu (1996), it is argued that experience has a great impact on the development of principals by its "multiple pathways and trajectories through different phases of … lives" (ibid:206). These writers suggest four main stages and some sub-stages through which headship passes. The main phases are identified as: Initiation, Development, Autonomy and Disenchantment, which are similar to those of Gronn (1999).

According to Day and Bakioglu (1996), Initiation is classified into two important processes, these being learning on the job, and working within an existing organisation's frame and structure, and this stage can be easy or difficult depending upon the organisational circumstances. Inman (2007) considers Initiation as a sub-stage of the Incumbency stage in Gronn's classification on the grounds that heads are already discharging the responsibilities of their role. Day and Bakioglu (1996) also suggest that idealism, uncertainty and adjustment are three sub-phases within this phase, each one being distinctly different from the others. The second stage is Development, which Day and Bakioglu (1996:212) consider as "the most active, most satisfactory, most rewarding" for leaders as it is at this point where they seek to apply their vision to expand their educational organisations. At this stage, leaders are also characterised by being confident and self-questioning in some areas while avoiding certain situations where they feel uncertain. Comparing this stage with the stages in Gronn's (1999) framework, it is seen to equate with the Incumbency phase where leaders have developed their characters, projected authoritativeness and expanded their self-realisation. Autonomy is the third phase in the Day and Bakioglu framework, and at this point leaders are characterised as being competent and capable of evaluating previous decisions and informing new ones. However, negative effects occur on individual progress and leadership efficiency due to the pressure placed upon them by governing bodies and communities who are unwilling to accept further change. The most striking features of leaders in the last phase entitled Disenchantment, are lack of confidence, lack of enthusiasm, increasing personal exhaustion, and the loss of vision. At this stage, factors such as heavy workloads, illness, getting older, and lack of motivation, might

push leaders to a point where there is “no actual development” (ibid:219) and this is the time where leaders, as Gronn (1999:39) says, have to release “their psychological grip”.

In his study entitled the Career Map of School Headship, Ribbins (2003) attempted to combine the models proposed by both Day and Bakioglu (1996) and Gronn (1999) into a single framework which he called the “ideal typical pathways or routes to and through leadership” (ibid:63). This model consists of four stages which are: Formation, Accession, Incumbency, and Moving on.

Formation, according to Ribbins (2003), is described as the process that determines whether people can become leaders. At this early stage, potential leaders are subject to influence by relatives, school and schoolmates, peers, and their local communities. In this regard, Kets de Vries and Insead (1993:27) linked the behaviours of current and future leaders to the past, emphasising that “leaders must recognize the potential destructiveness of their actions, and understand the extent to which past experiences can influence their present and future behaviour”. The second stage is Accession, which refers to the time when individuals search for experience, leadership roles, positive interactions with work mates, and learn to be present. In other words, it is a step further towards a future leadership position and what McCall and Lawlor (2000) call “serving time” to achieve the ultimate goal. The third stage (Incumbency) is described by Ribbins (2003) as the actual journey of leadership. It records the time from when a head is first appointed to when s/he leaves the headship position. This stage is an alternative to that of Gronn (1999), and builds upon the four stages of Day and Bakioglu (1996). Ribbins (2003) believes that at this stage leaders can take one of two main routes, each of which has four sub-phases. The first three sub-phases coincide with the Day and Bakioglu (1996) classification which are: Initiation, Development, and Autonomy, whilst the fourth is introduced as Disenchantment or Enchantment. At this sub-stage, the leader must experience either positive feelings (confidence and competence) or negative feelings (disillusionment and loss of commitment). Although some factors such as heavy workload, illness, getting older, and lack of motivation, might push leaders to a point where there is “no actual development” (Day and Bakioglu, 1996:219), and where they must, as Gronn (1999:39) says, release “their psychological grip”, Ribbins (2003) still believes that there is a great chance that leaders will remain positive and enchanted. Experiencing either Disenchantment or Enchantment will shape the last stage of Incumbency. The final stage is Moving on. This mainly concentrates

on leaving headship and determining which direction to pursue. Ribbins (2003:68) suggests that "the disenchanted face the prospect of divestiture while the enchanted can look forward to reinvention".

Figure 2.1 summarises the leadership stages as identified by Gronn (1999), Day and Bakioglu (1996), and Ribbins (2003).

Stages	Gronn (1999)	Day and Bakioglu (1996)	Ribbins (2003)
1	Formation		Formation
	↓		↓
2	Accession		Accession
	↓		↓
3	Incumbency		Incumbency
	↓		↓
1		Initiation	Initiation
	↓	↓	↓
2		Development	Development
	↓	↓	↓
3		Autonomy	Autonomy
	↓	↓	↓
4	Divestiture	Disenchantment	Disenchantment/Enchantment

Figure 2.1: The Leadership Stages as Conceptualised by Gronn (1999), Day and Bakioglu (1996), and Ribbins (2003).

Interestingly, these frameworks have been used by Inman (2011) in a fairly recent study entitled 'The Journey to Leadership for Academics in Higher Education'. Using the models proposed by Gronn (1999), Day and Bakioglu (1996), and a combination of the two presented by Ribbins (2003), Inman (2011:228) argues that understanding the life history of leaders does not only help leaders to understand themselves better but also helps them to know how to lead and associate with others, and she believes that this "has important implications when developing potential leaders".

When applying the Formation stage, proposed by Gronn (1999) and Ribbins (2003), to leaders in HE, the outcomes were active, showing that most of the participants were grown in secure, supportive, encouraging, and cohesive families, despite the fact that these families were generally not formally educated. The second stage, Accession, was also confirmed as present in the HE experience of potential leaders. However, Inman

(2011:234) observed that whilst "this developmental period saw the aspirant leaders embark on their academic career, not all experienced academia at the outset". Additionally, she identified this as the time when leadership candidates searched for experience, leadership roles, and positive interactions with work mates. She adds that despite this stage being reached by leaders by different routes, it is obvious they must all learn different types of skills, which they draw upon in their subsequent leadership careers. A striking feature of this stage, when identified among individuals in HE, is the desire to continue to learn and be challenged. Inman (2011) suggests three phases within the Accession stage: i) the experimental phase, ii) the developmental phase, and iii) the consolidation phase. During the experimental phase, academic leaders try out new jobs and roles; in the developmental phase they develop their expertise in these roles; and in the consolidation phase, they take on positions of responsibility and consolidate experience.

The third stage of Inman's model is the Incumbency stage. Gronn (1999) believes that the roles of leaders at this stage coincide with their personal needs, and help them on the path to self-actualisation. However, according to Inman (2011), leaders in HE consider their opportunities for research, which they prefer to be engaged in, to be diluted by their leadership roles and duties. Nevertheless, in the Incumbency stage, they have continued their leadership journey and improved their authority through their personal power as well as through the encouragement of their educational organisation and teammates. This clearly conflicts with Gronn's (1999) assertion that the control exercised by leaders is under threat. Inman (2011) suggests as leaders do not undergo any formal training or development, they must experience some sort of informal initiative that contributes towards their development and their use of autonomy.

Inman (2011) considers the last stage in her model to be one of Reclamation. According to her analysis, the characteristics within it do not equate either with Gronn's (1999) fourth stage of 'divestiture' nor with the phase of 'disenchantment' identified by Day and Bakioglu (1996). Inman (2011:237) says of her last stage: "although making a difference is a recurring theme, the excitement of the research and what it is hoping to achieve appears to be the overriding theme, irrespective of being a leader of a faculty". Hence, Inman (2011) supports Ribbins' (2003) viewpoint that whilst a fourth stage is required, this is not necessarily one of 'disenchantment' because whilst leaders may not be interested in progressing further up the career ladder, fearing such progressions might take them away from their interests, they nonetheless express their desire to

continue doing what they have previously enjoyed, and this clearly has nothing to do with disillusionment. Inman (2011:238), therefore, suggests 'reclamation' as an appropriate name for this stage for leaders in HE "because it describes a situation where leaders reclaim previous work and interests to re-focus their energy on these".

Clearly, the passing through different life stages, has an influence on the approach leaders take, irrespective of the context in which they eventually find themselves to be leaders. Specifically, in the case of HE however, comparing Inman's (2011) research with that of Gronn (1999), and Day and Bakioglu (1996), it can be seen that HE leaders experience some stages that are similar to those of 'formation' and 'accession', identified within the models of these researchers, but that their later stages appear to be slightly different. In general, there is very little written about leaders' life history and career development, and consequently, finding answers to questions such as who will and who will not become leaders, and how they will emerge, is not easy. In this regard, Gronn (1999:31) says:

> "The field of leadership studies lacks a sound comparative point of reference against which to map leaders' biographic experiences and activities. It is one thing to scrutinize leaders as individuals in isolation, but the field has remarkably few useful benchmarks or parameters for examining the circumstances of leaders' lives in relation to one another, and also in respect of globalization and better appreciation of different, deeply entrenched cultural approaches to problem-solving the provision of such a scheme is timely."

It can be appreciated, therefore, that an exploration of how particular life experiences rather than others become formative in terms of leadership development, and how they are assimilated by leaders such that they can be drawn upon for future application is both important and worthy of research activity (Janson, 2008). In this regard, several theoretical approaches have been proposed to facilitate reflection. The lifespan (Avolio and Gibbons, 1988) and the life-stories (Shamir and Eilam, 2005) models are two of these approaches, with the former concentrating on establishing particular events as formative, and the latter focusing on the meaning attached to such events, which subsequently gives them formative characteristics.

Avolio and Gibbons (1988) include a composite of family factors, contextual factors, and individual factors in the lifespan approach. Family factors embrace all family experience such as parental encouragement and support, or the lack of these things; contextual factors include opportunities for leadership both formal and informal, and

personal development; and individual factors involve the ways in which individuals come to manage their emotions and capitalise upon their life experience to forge new opportunities for themselves. These events are variously called by researchers as critical events, incidents or turning points (Gronn, 1999), defining moments (Parker, 2002), and trigger events (Luthans, 2003); and however called, these are the antecedents of leadership development. Tripp (2012:8) makes the point that in educational research, critical incidents are created rather than existing independently and simply waiting to be discovered. This creation arises from an observer considering an incident and interpreting what has happened in a particular way to find the relevance of one action to another. Inman (2007) notes that an incident becomes critical by the fact that it is interpreted as being of significance, and hence becomes memorable. This type of event is considered by Gronn (1999) in his model of leadership development, where it appears in the shape of a temporary setback that is itself an integral part of the career journey.

Clearly, if incidents can only become critical as a result of consideration and interpretation, then reflection is integral to the process of creating a critical incident. And reflection is encouraged by studying life history and the way in which perceptions of personal experience are formed (Inman, 2007). Moreover, the study of life history allows a large volume of qualitative data that covers a long time period to be obtained, and thus provides an efficient way of gathering such data (Angelides, 2001).

In the life-stories approach of Shamir and Eilam (2005), the interpretations which individuals make of their experiences and the meanings and significance they attach to those experiences are stressed as being more important than the actual experiences themselves. From this it can be understood that when individuals discuss how their leadership abilities developed, it is not the specific events they refer to but the feelings attached to events and the lessons learned. In respect of such feelings, it is argued that the authenticity components of leadership (trust, confidence, hope, intimacy) are formed as individuals reflect on their relationships between those who lead, and those who follow (George, 2003). Shamir and Eilam (2005) propose that the stories of individuals' formative experiences serve as those individuals' internal meaning systems which they use to interpret reality. Hence, the internal meaning systems function as the basis of leaders' self-concepts and their ideas about how they should perform as leaders.

Janson (2008), however, does not share the view espoused by Shamir and Eilam (2005), suggesting rather that it is the experience itself that provides leaders with food for

thought. For example, he makes the point that two leaders having the same experience might derive different meanings from it and develop their leadership capabilities in different ways. Furthermore, he argues that success experienced as a leader irrespective of the context, not only reinforces an individual's self-image as a leader, but also strengthens that person's confidence in his/her leadership talent.

In this study, it is essential to take account of both. The former concentrates on establishing leaders' experiences and the latter focuses on how leaders interpret this experience and the meaning and significance they attach to it. They both influence the way leaders lead. Life history can, therefore, be used as a means of helping our understanding of leadership, and this particular theory is thus of direct relevance to this study, in that it can help in interpreting the data gathered from the empirical work.

2.5 Cultural Identity and Leadership

It has already been mentioned in the previous section that "leaders … are socialized according to cultural assumptions and values which … are overwhelmingly not of their choosing (Gronn, 1999:32). This confirms that it is the environment in which they live that plants ideas concerning leadership behaviour. Likewise, it can be seen that life lived, and life told stories cannot be divorced from the cultural surroundings in which they occur, as the "thoughts and meanings known to the person whose life it is" (Usher, 1998:57) are constructed in relation to that person's culture, and the life history is controlled by cultural beliefs (Brundrett et al., 2003). Consequently, a study of cultural theory is essential in a work which seeks to compare leadership styles in two different cultural environments, and given the intention to make comparisons between the behaviour of deans from the UK and Libya, it is important to explore whether differences in their attitudes resulting from cultural characteristics, condition their approach to leadership, and how. However, culture is an extremely complex construct, and in a comparison of individuals from different countries, as is the case with this study, it makes sense to consider culture in terms of national differences brought about by natural predispositions to behave in a certain way rather than another. Such difference can be considered in terms of national character.

Research into national character is not new, and many scholars have investigated the role of culture in shaping ideas and behaviour among the people of particular countries

and/or regions in the world (Inkeles and Levinson, 1969; Laurent, 1983) showing that there are quite definite variations in behaviour emanating from a complex of traditions, religious imperatives, and cultural requirements. Among these variations in ideas and behaviour are conceptions of leadership, what it entails to be a leader of other people, and what is expected of those who are in positions of being led.

It was already mentioned at the start of this chapter that the conception of leadership as existing in the advanced economies of the West, was precisely that – a notion developed in that particular context. However, in the non-Western perspective, and particularly that prevalent in the developing countries of Africa, leadership tends to be authoritarian (Harber and Davies, 2002), in contrast from the more democratic paradigm seen in the West. A leader is expected to be authoritarian and indeed, in the context of educational leaders, headteachers are appointed from the pool of ordinary teachers, they do not compete on the basis of qualification for the job, and merely become leaders in the traditional masculine style almost as a rite of passage (Harber and Davies, 2002).

The literature on national character is indeed of interest to the whole leadership debate, and of the many contributions to this body of knowledge, is that made by Hofstede (1980), a Dutch academic whose research conducted between 1967 and 1973, is worthy of special note, as it was undertaken on a truly international platform, using employees from IBM subsidiaries in 53 countries and regions around the world, thereby making it the most comprehensive study of its kind (Harzing and Van Ruysseveldt, 1996; and Jones, 2007). Indeed, the three regions (East Africa, West Africa, and Arab countries, respectively covered a further 15 countries). Moreover, given that Libya was included among the seven Arab countries, Hofstede's theory is particularly relevant to this study.

That theory was derived both from theoretical reasoning and the statistical analysis of the survey data gathered over a six-year period, and which came from a relatively homogenised research population comprising employees who were similar in age, sex, and occupation, and who naturally worked according to the IBM organisational culture. Despite all these similarities, Hofstede was still able to identify major differences along four dimensions, and produced an extremely valuable typology in which the 53 countries and regions were plotted and ranked according to their propensity to instil certain attitudes and behaviours among their citizens. The outcome of such propensities was clearly, as noted by Mead and Andrews (2009:39), that "work-related values are NOT universal"; from this we can conclude that such diversity can also have

implications for the way leaders in different cultures perceive their role and responsibilities. The four dimensions of behaviour identified in this vast piece of research conducted during that six year period were: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism versus Collectivism, and Masculinity versus Femininity. These are now briefly described.

Power Distance: This is a reflection of the extent to which members of a society accept social inequality. Hofstede (2002:79) argues that "the basic issue, which different societies handle differently, is human inequality. Inequality can occur in areas such as prestige, wealth, and power … this inequality is usually formalized in boss-subordinate relationships". Referred to as power distance, this shows the respect that individuals have for authority, and shows their expectations of the relationship between those with, and those without power. Clearly, this dimension has relevance for beliefs about leadership, since in high power distance societies, individuals know and accept their allotted place, and rarely step outside of that. They accept the orders and instruction given by those who are legitimately in power, irrespective of how that power is legitimised, and do not challenge the status quo – again irrespective of wishes for, for instance, greater worker democracy. The Arab countries (Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) scored 80 on the Power Distance index, indicating a very high level of acceptance of societal inequality, and therefore, one would expect compliance with instructions from those further up the hierarchy.

Uncertainty Avoidance: Hofstede (2002:145) states that "uncertainty about the future is a basic fact of human life with which we try to cope through the domains of technology, law, and religion". He continues that it is manifested in organisations "in the form of technology, rules, and rituals" (ibid:145). These rules and rituals are attempts by society to control ambiguities, and they include the use of religion to help alleviate the extreme anxieties that can be brought about by not being able to predict the future (Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede (1980:146) argues that "ways of coping with uncertainty belong to the cultural heritages of societies, and … are transferred and reinforced through basic institutions such as the family, the school, and the state". In high uncertainty avoidance societies, individuals are socialised to adhere to regulations to achieve a result in the short term, rather than to anticipate events in the future. The emphasis is on solving immediate problems rather than on formulating long-term

strategies. Obviously, this dimension has relevance in terms of leadership style, since leaders are steered into 'playing safe' and caretaker roles, rather than being encouraged to demonstrate creativity and innovation. The Arab countries scored 68 on the Uncertainty Avoidance index, again a high score, demonstrating the need for clear guidance through strict rule-governed activity.

Individualism versus Collectivism: This dimension "describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity that prevails in a given society" (Hofstede, 2002:209), and is seen in whether people live as nuclear or extended families, or tribes. Social ties, and the accompanying obligations are strong in collectivist societies, whereas in individualistic ones, there is an underlying belief that people are responsible for themselves, and their own well-being (Harzing and Van Ruysseveldt, 1996). People from societies that score high on collectivism place the interests of their tribes/families before those of the organisation, and reward for performance is often team-based rather than directed to particular individuals, which serves to depress individual effort, and indeed any deep level of introspection. Moreover, the focus on social cohesion and the strong allegiance to tribe, family and friendship groupings in collectivist societies, means that appointments in all organisations are underpinned by nepotism rather than merit, a situation which is accepted as being part of the social order, but which nonetheless can result in talented people switching-off, and individuals being elevated to positions of responsibility and leadership without any qualification to occupy those roles. The Arab countries scored low (38) on the dimension of individualism, thereby demonstrating the power of their tribal societies.

Masculinity versus Femininity: Hofstede (2002:279) states that "the duality of the sexes is a fundamental fact with which different societies cope in different ways". He notes that "almost universally, women attach more importance to social goals such as relationships, helping others, and the physical environment, and men attach more importance to ego goals such as careers and money" (ibid). However, in his research it emerged that the degree to which these differences were apparent varied, and hence, this fourth dimension of masculinity versus femininity was developed. This dimension suggests that "masculine societies define male-female roles more rigidly than do feminine societies" (Harzing and Van Ruysseveldt, 1996:137). Clearly, this aspect of Hofstede's analysis can be criticised since he essentially based this dimension on stereotypes associated with being masculine or being feminine. So, for example, assertiveness and competitiveness are characteristics attributed to males and

accordingly, he labelled cultures which are more assertive and competitive as 'masculine'; in contrast, he labelled cultures which scored higher in nurturing and negotiating as 'feminine' given that those are characteristics attributed to women. The Arab countries scored 53 on the Masculinity index, ranking 28/29th in the list of all 53 countries/regions. This suggests that in fact Arab society is fairly evenly balanced, that male and female characteristics attract equal value, a circumstance that would seem to be proposed from the Islamic viewpoint. Hence, it might be thought that with large value placed on female characteristics, females would be as evident in leadership roles, and indeed they are, but in different areas to those traditionally dominated by men. This results from the strong demarcation between the roles of males and females in Arab society, although more so in some Arab countries than others. From a leadership perspective, this is important, as especially in those countries where segregation is the norm, it is virtually impossible for women to be appointed as leaders in the true sense, as they are not able to direct men as well as women, (Alabani, 2010).

To these four dimensions of national culture, a fifth was added in response to work which Hofstede undertook with Bond (Hofstede and Bond, 1988), using a large sample of students from Confucian heritage. The motivation for such collaboration between Hofstede and Bond was the criticism that Hofstede's original model and questionnaire items were all Western, thereby presenting an inherent Western bias (Mead and Andrews, 2009). Consequently, Bond analysed the data gathered by a group of researchers from nine Asian and Pacific countries, who had used an alternative instrument with an Asian orientation to small clusters of students from ten different national or ethnic groups. In exploring this data, Bond found similar outcomes to Hofstede, but noted less of a correlation with uncertainty avoidance, and subsequently developed the Chinese Values Survey, which together with Hofstede he administered to students of 23 countries. What emerged was a fifth dimension which they identified as essentially being concerned with a long-term, rather than a short-term orientation. Being characterised by persistence, respect for tradition, and accompanied by a search for virtue, the researchers entitled this **Confucian dynamism**, but it should not be assumed that this construct only appears in regions of Confucian heritage, as human beings around the world have relationships with time which predispose certain behaviour. In the organisation, it is reflected in the degree to which leaders and managers plan strategically for the long term.

As already mentioned, when Hofstede conducted his work with IBM personnel, he grouped some Arab countries together to form a regional perspective. Libya was included in this group, the other countries being Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and UAE. The scores for these countries which were aggregated, were as follows:

Power Distance Index 80	UK Comparison 35
Uncertainty Avoidance Index 68	UK Comparison 35
Individualism Index 38	UK Comparison 89
Masculinity Index 53	UK Comparison 66

A comparison of these scores reveals definite differences in respect of the first three dimensions, thereby suggesting that the average Libyan might hold quite different positions in his/her relationship with authority, in his/her attitudes towards planning for the long term, and in his/her feeling about loyalty to family/tribe rather than to work organisation, than the average person from the UK. Hence, it could be argued that these cultural variations might underlie the lack of advancement demonstrated in Libyan Higher Education Institutions because Libyans might not be predisposed to question authority or to plan strategically for the long term, and could be bound by tribal and familial ties to behave in ways that might be detrimental to efficient management in their work environments. This is one perspective that has not been explored in any published studies to date concerning the Libyan context.

However, this is only one part of the story because Libya's history has not entirely followed the same route as the other countries in the Arab group, Anderson (1986). As previously indicated, the data for Hofstede's study was gathered between 1967 and 1973, when the outcome of the influence of the monarchy had not been totally eradicated. Despite the Qadafi regime coming into power in 1969, it was not until 1977 (four years after the data collection), that the Revolution took place, and the new order was ushered into Libya, and it could be argued that Libyans might have been uncharacteristic of the Arab countries, and much more Westernised because of the period of Italian colonisation and the subsequent British and French administrations. Additionally, the strong presence of Western companies involved in the oil industry may have led to introduce a strong expatriate influence and methods of working mirroring those in the West. In these circumstances, leaders could be expected to be

more dynamic than suggested by the composite of the rankings obtained on Hofstede's dimensions.

Furthermore, despite the entrenchment after the Revolution of the Qadafi regime, for almost half a century, ideas about leadership and democracy were well developed through Qadafi's Green Book espousing the philosophy of giving authority to the people, and the creation of Popular Committees and General Assemblies which theoretically provided the means for all people to be part of a democratic process of government. From here, it is possible to conclude that Libyans per se, might have learned by experience, how to participate on their own account, and how to assume responsibility and leadership in respect of particular aspects of organisational life.

Nonetheless, whilst in theory, the authority to govern lay with the people of Libya, the reality was that authority was in fact highly concentrated with Qadafi himself, and there were no genuine positions of leadership devolved to others (Aessa and Yusef, 2014: Shalgum, 2012). In such a scenario, the levels of personal autonomy and opportunities for leadership could be expected to be far below those of other Arab countries, thereby, Libya might be placed even further away from the UK scores, signalling no development of leadership skill and experience amongst the general population. People appointed to leadership positions were placed in their roles with their allegiance to the Qadafi's political philosophy and completely irrespective of whether they possessed the skills, abilities, and qualifications to assume such positions, (Shalgum, 2012). Furthermore, according to Shalgum (2012), it was not considered sensible to prepare individuals to take up positions of leadership because if they had been given appropriate training and education in this respect, they might have emerged to challenge the status quo. So, this may lead to the understanding that this period of time had an impact on depressing the development of human capital in Libya such that leadership challenges would not be forthcoming, the outcome might be that in organisations of all kinds, including institutions of higher education, there were no leaders of any genuine credibility (Alkebti, (2012).

Clearly, the political environment has had some impact upon the psyche of Libyans, in which respect it seems appropriate to consider which of Hofstede's dimensions are pertinent to any analysis of leadership in the context of national character. In this connection, therefore, it is noted that for the purposes of this study the three dimensions of uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and collectivism are those that provide the most fruitful framework through which to interpret the behaviour of Libyan senior

academic leaders. As shown by the rankings, there are definite differences between the Libyan and Western rankings, and consequently these will be the areas where variations in approach to leadership occur.

This is not to suggest that Hofstede's cultural framework is the only vehicle which has value as an analytical tool. As acknowledged earlier, there are critics of Hofstede's cultural framework, and his work has been questioned by academics in part or whole. Some of the more pertinent issues argued by academics are its relevance, cultural homogeneity, national division, political influences, one company approach, out dated, too few dimensions, and statistical integrity.

Jones (2007) has reviewed the various criticisms, highlighting the controversial nature of Hofstede's claims, but noting at the same time that many great economists such as Keynes, Malthus, and Philips, have also attracted similar views yet remained current. However, it is important to acknowledge the claims against Hofstede's framework, and in this respect, the most frequent challenge is made on the grounds that cultural homogeneity in one nation or territory cannot be assumed. The argument is made by Nasif et al. (1991) and Redpath and Nielsen (1997) that most nations are comprised of groups of ethnic units. Consequently, within nation states there are heterogenous qualities among the populations which preclude all 'national' values to be absorbed by the entire population. This leads to the argument by several researchers (e.g., Dorfman and Howell, 1988; Lindell and Arvonen, 1996; Smith, 1998) that Hofstede fails to account for community disparities, and influences. However, it would seem that Institutional Theory has an answer for this criticism, in that the institutions of a nation, as the products of the dominant class/government reflect the cultural values of that class/government and permeate into all aspects of life. So, whilst there may well be ethnic and community differences, ultimately there are institutions which embody 'national' values and that govern everyday life. It therefore, becomes impossible, not to take account of these as through their very government of life, they are influential and do become assimilated.

Almost the opposite of this argument is brought forward by McSweeney (2000) who suggests that nations themselves cannot be taken as the proper units of analysis as borders are often artificial, and therefore cultural dispositions can flow across several nations. This is highlighted by DiMaggio (1997) who notes the fragmentation of culture across group and national borders. However, it is not certain, how this can be a serious criticism, or in fact whether it is a methodological or intellectual one, since it is clear

from Hofstede's groupings that he recognised this as shown in the groupings of Arab countries, East African countries, and West African countries. Had he not done so, the 15 countries he grouped into these categories would have each been given individual country status, but clearly he acknowledged that whilst considerable geographical distance exists between Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, the fundamental Islamic nature of Arab life precipitated the same cultural inclinations. Equally, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia (East Africa) can be analysed in the same way, as can be Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone (West Africa). Hofstede (1998) uses national identity as a construct because it is the only vehicle available to assess cultural differences. From that point one can proceed to identify similarities among nations, and often these arbitrary boundaries, as happened in the Arab World with the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916.

Another criticism comes on the basis of various political influences that were prevalent at the time of Hofstede's research and which are believed to have had an impact. Occurring post-Second World War, and in the midst of the Cold War between Russia and the West, the survey was conducted with one American company that through capitalism had permeated many countries of the world, but not the genuinely poor Third World countries, nor from the socialist countries. The poorer Third World countries had no infrastructure to support multinational companies, and the socialist countries were entrenched in the Cold War, thereby not doing business with the West. In this connection, it is argued (see Graves 1986; Olie 1995; Søndergaard 1994) that a study of just one company cannot generate sufficiently comprehensive data about an entire population, and that certain dimensions identified as a result such as Masculinity (Sondergaard, 1994) and Uncertainty Avoidance (Newman and Nollen, 1996), may have been sensitive to the timing of the study.

However, Hofstede's intention was to estimate cultural differences and not to arrive at any absolute determination, and his belief was that cross-sectional analysis obtained through access to one large organisation, was indeed suitable (Hofstede, 1998). Furthermore, as noted by Hofstede (1998), it is possible when using one single multinational employer to control for variations in corporate policy and practice that serve to produce different influences on worker behaviour, and with that variable eliminated, the only other explanation for behavioural differences is national culture.

The challenge has been laid at the theory that the data obtained by Hofstede is now out-dated, and that globalisation has brought convergence of cultures that sweep away

national differences. However, countering that criticism, Hofstede (1998) argues that centuries of indoctrination bring about cultural outcomes, and that irrespective of the globalisation phenomena, fundamental beliefs and values remain the same. Culture does not change overnight, it experiences very gradual shifts, and if it shows signs of changing too quickly or in an undesirable direction, the authoritative institutions in a country step in to put on the brake, as seen for instance in recent times in France and Turkey in respect of the wearing of the headscarf by Muslim women. In France, this has been banned in all government institution, in Turkey it has become a requirement. These are classic examples of national institutions taking action to prevent cultural drift and thus to sustain the national culture, and there are many more such instances that support Hofstede's ideas about the endurance of mental programming. Hence, the claim that his data is outdated is easily dismissed by reference to contemporary actions around the world.

Other challenges are built on the claim that statistical errors appear in Hofstede's work (Dorfman and Howell, 1988), and that there are too few dimensions identified on which culture can be differentiated. In a way these two claims are inter-related. Hofstede (1998) agrees that additional dimensions, if identified, could be added to his original work. However, identifying new dimensions is not an easy task. The claim by Dorfman and Howell (1988) that shows Hofstede to have used the same questionnaire item on more than one scale, and to reveal several cross-loadings, is indicative of the fact that dimensions of culture do not exist in a vacuum. They 'bleed' into others, thereby forming composites. For example, it is possible to attribute the same piece of behaviour in slightly different circumstances to power distance in one situation, and to uncertainty avoidance in other.

And finally, Schwartz (1999) points to culturally sensitive and subject values as being very difficult to measure using the survey method adopted by Hofstede. However, as Hofstede has argued, the survey was not the only tool used, and his intention was not to measure but to gain estimates.

On the other side of these various and not overwhelmingly supported arguments, are academics who support Hofstede's work. Indeed, it is regarded as one of the most broadly used pieces of research among scholars and practitioners, such as Jones (2007) and Bond (2002). For instance, more than a decade ago, Søndergaard (1994) found that Hofstede's 1980 work received 1,036 citations, whereas another well regarded study on strategy by Miles and Snow received only 200. Certainly, the timing of Hofstede's data

collection, the inclusion of Libya within the Arab countries, and the particular dimensions developed do show the potential for a model which can be used to make comparisons between UK deans and Libyan deans, and moreover to suggest reasons why they occur. Furthermore, as observed by Mead and Andrews (2009:43), "no other model has gone so far in controlling its informant population across so wide a number of cultures … this control means that comparisons can be made, despite questions that might arise over generalizing to other occupational groups within the same national culture". They also argue that "the connotations of each dimension have relevance to management" (ibid:44), and therefore, given previous discussions in this chapter to the effect that in HE management and leadership are often used interchangeably, as a theory, it is also relevant to this study. Clearly, it is a useful framework to overlay upon the Life History Stages, as it can help to explain the predispositions of the interviewees in their interpretations of their life lived and life told stories, and as will be seen from the following section, culture underlies totally, the development of professional identify and knowledge of self.

2.6 Leaders' Professional Identity and Knowledge of Self (Figured Worlds)

In focusing upon their life experiences, individuals implicitly engage in a degree of introspection, and questions regarding identity (who they are and what they do) are part and parcel of that activity. It has already been mentioned in Section 2.5, that introspection is not at the forefront of any activity naturally undertaken by individuals in collectivist cultures, and this is an important point to bear in mind, since understanding professional identity and enactment of 'self', which forms a key aspect of life history, actually demands this. Consequently, any consideration of the concept of professional identity must bear in mind the fact that underlying all decisions implicit or otherwise concerning how an individual arrives at his/her identity in this respect, the impact of culture will be felt.

The coming discussion identifies how leaders' professional identities are shaped and how leaders position themselves among others and perceive the fact that they are leaders.

The notion of professional identity has emerged as a separate field of research in the last two decades. It is defined differently and introduced in different ways, in various theoretical frameworks in the literature. However, there is some agreement on the

concept, an important point of consensus being that professional identity is not a stable entity and cannot be considered as a fixed attribute of a person, but rather as an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences encountered in the personal and professional roles associated with any given context. Identity can be seen, as Beijaard et al. (2004:108) observe, as the answer to the question "who am I at this moment?"

Mead (1934) described self as "something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process". Essentially, therefore, our self-view is obtained directly from our environment, and implicitly our culture, and the majority of what we know about ourselves is derived from others. Since self develops in a society, the sociological approach to understanding self and its parts (identities) suggests that one has to appreciate the society in which the self acts (Stets and Burke, 2003), keeping in mind that the self is always performing in a social context where other selves do exist (Stryker, 1980). Therefore, to become a certain kind of person in the world:

> "... one cannot have an identity of any sort without some interpretive system under-writing the recognition of that identity ... the interpretive system may be people's historically and culturally different views of nature; it may be the norms, traditions, and rules of institutions, it may be the discourse and dialogue of others, or it may be the workings of affinity groups" (Gee, 2000:107-108).

It is, therefore, the social world in which individuals live that become the vehicle for those people's being and becoming (Creaby, 2016). That world is the context for identity to emerge and be shaped (Gee, 2000). Hence, individuals become engaged in a form of social learning as well as developing their cognitive abilities, and by 'figuring' how they fit into the complexities of the life worlds in which they operate, they find their place both in their immediate sociocultural world, and the wider societal and cultural setting (Holland et al., 1998). 'Finding their place' can therefore, be considered as 'determining who they are' – in other words, as constructing their identity, and this is arrived at through social development that "combines the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations" (Holland et al., 1998:5). Such combinations are all themselves impacted upon by the organisation of power, rank

and status, and as has been indicated earlier in Section 2.5, Hofstede's research has demonstrated categorically that such notions are heavily conditioned by culture.

As an attempt to understand the personal and professional circumstances that lead academics to become leaders, Floyd (2012:273) argues that "it is impossible to fully understand an academic's career decisions without exploring the nexus and interrelationships between their personal and professional identities, manifested through different socialization experiences over time". He finds that academics become leaders in education because they consider leadership to be empowering, allowing them to make a difference and have more control over their work. They believe that this role change helps academics to "exert more control over their professional and organizational socialization, which, in turn, would allow more harmony with their professional and personal identities" (ibid:282). Leaders in this position encounter a huge range of professional and organisational roles. These changing roles and responsibilities, arguably, have a potential impact on professional identities, a circumstance that urges them to have multiple, and flexible identities, or to develop what Clegg (2008) calls 'hybrid' identities based on generic, cross-disciplinary, and cross-university experiences, rather than identities based on the traditional beliefs of discipline-specific academic work.

This is a straightforward and seemingly logical process but it must be remembered that in constructing one's life story, it is entirely possible for an individual not to present an authentic account of what s/he has experienced, for any number of reasons. Sikes (2000) explored the phenomenon of people lying, concluding that they do this to ensure their identity is portrayed more favourably than they themselves believe it would be if their stories were accurate. Hence, their constructions of fantastic life stories are done for social and psychological purposes, which involve in many cases, the need to think about certain unhappy experiences in a different way, one which makes them easier to cope with.

This implies that life stories may change over time, an idea argued by McAdams (1996) who found that the position in the life span has an influence upon the way people tell these stories. For example, stories can change depending upon whether they are being told at the start of a career when experiences are relatively few, or later on when challenges have been faced and surmounted, and the reflective process causes events to

be considered using different methods, such that what was previously viewed as negative and relayed as such, becomes positive, and hence, changes the life story. Of course, a person's existing self-construct and preparedness to analyse experience such as to extract the lessons for future personal development are important in this respect, as noted by Avolio and Hannah (2008).

What is important to factor into any interpretation of life stories, however, is the fact that whilst research studies may have gone to all lengths to protect participants' confidentiality of information and general anonymity, and hence to persuade informants to tell the truth, it is not possible to guarantee that people will be honest (Sikes, 2000). Moreover, it is possible to obtain different stories about the same event from different observers/participants, and this does not necessarily imply that one or other of the story-tellers is deliberately telling lies, but rather confirms the social construction approach to all situations whereby multiple realities and multiple selves exist. For the researcher involved in life story research, these possibilities must be borne in mind.

What seems clear in the literature is that there are many theoretical models in play. However, arguably, it is necessary to adopt a sociocultural perspective in any attempt to establish how individuals (including HE leaders of course) develop their professional identity and the ability to act on their own initiative, position themselves among others and perceive the fact that they are leaders. That said, however, individuals do not simply accumulate their identities in a vacuum but rather do so as members of groups which function to transmit certain beliefs, values, and behavioural norms, all of which support growing predispositions to lead or follow (Mortimer and Simmons, 1978). Moreover, the groups may be formal or informal, since socialisation occurs in either scenario, and from this individuals are confirmed in their construction of reality and their role within it (Wentworth, 1980).

As people operate in their respective, small worlds, they come to 'figure out' who they are (Urrieta Jr, 2007). It was Holland et al. (1998) who initially coined the term 'figured worlds' in their work entitled 'Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds', to refer to "socially produced, culturally constituted activities" (ibid:40-41), through which "people come to conceptually (cognitively) and materially/procedurally produce (perform) new self-understandings (identities)" (Urrieta Jr, 2007). According to Holland et al. (1998), figured worlds possess four characteristics.

1. They are comprised of cultural phenomena, providing a world for individuals to enter and shape.
2. They function as worlds of meaning that give significance to people's positions and social encounters.
3. They are socially organised and reproduced, resulting in a blueprint for different relationships.
4. They distribute people to areas of action, allowing familiar groupings of people, and individual senses of self.

A 'figured world' is therefore, one in which individuals make sense of themselves by reference to the set of meanings around them that have gradually been derived from history and practice (Clammer et al., 2004). Hence, it embodies all activities that are socially and culturally produced, and makes for a system through which people can decide their own identity. According to Vågan (2011) 'figured worlds' are made and re-made through the social engagement of those associated with them, in specific times and spaces, which represent social and cultural meaning.

In seeking to determine how identity and agency are formed, the role of artifacts is implied, but so too is the need to adopt a positional perspective that explores how individuals place themselves as social actors in their cultural worlds (Vågan, 2011). In this respect, Holland et al. (1998:127) argue that "positional identities have to do with the day-to-day and on-the-ground relations of power, deference and entitlement, social affiliation and distance – with the social-interactional, social-relational structures of the lived world". Basically, this is a reference to a person's social standing, and in respect of leadership, it is clear that those who perceive themselves as leaders have a definite sense of their position in relation to others, as expressed by Holland et al. (1998:3) when they say

> "people tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves who they are and then try to act as though they are who they say they are. These self-understandings, especially those with strong emotional resonance for the teller, are what we refer to as identities".

In the 'figured world' perspective, identity emerges as the outcome of social learning, and thus as an entity subject to constant reconstruction (Carroll and Levy, 2010), yet

from a psychological viewpoint, identity is often conceived of as a singular construct, both stable and fixed. This has obvious attraction as a theory especially when considering the role of those in power, and it is not surprising that the qualities required of a leader are usually seen as including stability in ideas and practice (Inman, 2007). Certainly, the leadership literature focuses on the possession of a set of traits, skills and abilities, all of which promote a certain type of behaviour (Fairhurst, 2011 and Inman, 2007). Nonetheless, Fairhurst (2009) observes that despite the obvious value of the leadership 'blueprint', it does attract criticism. Sinclair (2011), for instance, complains that such notions of leadership give the impression that 'authentic' leadership can only be achieved via the possession of the stipulated qualities. Consequently, alternative perspectives can be useful to the debate on leadership (Creaby, 2016), and hence identity as a leader.

It can be understood, therefore, that the use of both the sociocultural and positioning perspectives is useful in any attempt to explore the concept of leadership in education since the frameworks they offer can trace how leaders emerge and from what background, i.e., from what social (figured) worlds they come. This implies the learning to some extent of a life story.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored several aspects of the leadership construct, essentially to arrive at an understanding of this as a different concept from that of management, and to position it in the context of HE. Given the intention of the study to conduct a comparative analysis of deans in UK and Libyan universities, the prevailing circumstances surrounding how leadership is enacted in both environments has been presented.

Thereafter, the chapter has focused on presenting the potential for an integrated theoretical model through which the opinions and behaviour of UK and Libyan deans can be understood. Essentially, this is a three-pronged approach in which life history, national character (culture), and professional identity as emerging through individuals' attempt to figure where they stand in relation to the world in which they operate, form a continuum of inter-related ideas which can help to explain the data gathered in the study.

This integrated theoretical model is subsequently used, as described in the following chapter, as the underpinning for the empirical research. It lends itself well to the type of qualitative methodology adopted as in exploring life histories, issues of culture and personal and professional identity cannot fail to be considered. The methodology is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology employed to pursue the empirical study of the senior academic leaders in the UK and in Libya. It begins by considering the study within the wider framework of the type of knowledge it seeks to derive from the participants, concluding that the knowledge lies in the humanistic domain. It then considers the philosophical stance which underpins the methods adopted, and this is followed by reference to the research approach, which in keeping with the interpretivist underpinning, is a qualitative one. A description of the research methods employed, in particular the in-depth interview, and the advantages and disadvantages associated with this method of data collection, is then provided. Thereafter, a discussion of sampling, and the eventual sample chosen is given. The piloting process in respect of the interview protocol is then discussed, and this is followed by a report of the way in which the actual interviews were conducted. The ethical considerations to be taken into account when undertaking research are then introduced, and the way in which these were managed in the study are indicated. The chapter then introduces the data analysis, considering this from the viewpoint of the type of analysis (in this case thematic analysis), and the way in which the analysis was actually conducted. This is followed by a discussion of the position of the researcher in any study, and considerations regarding the overall validity and reliability of the study. A short conclusion draws the chapter to an end.

3.2 The Wider Framework

It is useful to place this study and what it seeks to achieve within a wider framework in order to clarify precisely what it is about. In this connection, the work of Ribbins and Gunter (2002) is useful since it provides a model through which it is possible to identify the nature of the knowledge to be generated in any study. The framework proposed is known as the 'five knowledge domains' which are summarised in Table 3.1. Using these domains, it is possible to position research, and from that, to determine how to go about it.

Table 3.1: The Five Knowledge Domains

Knowledge Domain	Meaning
Conceptual	Concerned with issues of ontology and epistemology, conceptual clarification.
Critical	Concerned to reveal and emancipate leaders and followers from social justice.
Humanistic	Gathers and theorises from the experiences and biographies of those who are leaders and managers.
Evaluative	Abstracts and measures the effect of leadership at various levels of social interaction.
Instrumental	Provision of effective strategies for leaders to deliver organisational goals.

Source: Ribbins and Gunter (2002:378)

In the current study, individuals' lives and experiences are explored, with a view to determining "how knowledge is produced", and therefore, the study can be aligned with the third knowledge domain, which is the humanistic one. The study is directed "towards developing knowledge-for-understanding" (Hoyle, 2005:113), and might be used, as Inman (2007) states, as a "basis" to enable "knowledge-for-action" (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002:18).

3.3 Philosophical Stance

Research, according to Cohen et al. (2011:3), is "concerned with understanding the world; this is informed by how we view our world(s), what we take understanding to be and what we see as the purpose of understanding". Philosophical issues are, therefore, integral to the research process because they constitute what researchers 'silently think' about research (Scott and Usher, 1999a). In order to understand the chosen design of this research study (its method and methodology), it is first necessary to identify the ontological and epistemological stance I, as researcher, intend to take since this informs all that follows. On this issue, Klenke (2016:16) argues:

> "Epistemology is intimately related to both ontology and methodology; ontology involves the philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses how we come to know that reality while methodology identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge of it."

Essentially, therefore, if a researcher holds a particular view of what counts as knowledge (ontology), then s/he will usually hold another particular view of how that knowledge can be found (epistemology), and of the best way of finding it

(methodology). This is the relationship between epistemology, ontology, and methodology.

The two main traditions in such thinking are expressed in the positivist, and interpretivist paradigms. The former developed from observation of the natural sciences and is underpinned by the belief that "there exists a single, objective reality or 'truth' which can be discovered by scientific investigation"; the latter considers 'truth' to be more elusive, something constructed by individuals according to their view of what is happening around them, that is to say, their social world (Gilbert, 2001:33).

Given that it has already been indicated that in this study, that the intention is to explore individuals' lives and experiences to establish how they produce knowledge and identities for themselves, it is clear that implicitly, this study lies within the interpretivist paradigm. The combined use of the life history, and figured worlds approaches is an inherent recognition that knowledge will be gained through these mechanisms, and that indeed, that 'knowledge' will be socially-constructed rather than being in the realms of universal 'truths'. Consequently, the positivist philosophy is rejected as a foundation for this study.

3.4 Research Approach

Within the literature it is clear that varying approaches can be taken to undertake research. Indeed, as noted by Bryman and Bell (2015), and in reference to the two fundamental philosophical positions discussed in the previous section, there are different traditions in research, and these adopt different methods to gather the data required. However, Bryman and Bell (2015) do argue that there is no automatic prescription or rejection of any specific method; and this is an assertion which finds consensus in the literature, where it is emphasised that the aim and objectives of a study, and the types of research question being asked, are the determinants of the particular methods chosen to collect the information required.

In this study, the aim is to explore the phenomenon of educational leadership, in particular to determine how leaders learn to lead. This entails delving into the life histories of educational leaders (specifically at the level of senior leader in Higher Education), and exploring how these life experiences influence the development of their leadership skills, and the eventual leadership styles they display. It also involves

exploring cultural predispositions which push these senior leaders into a particular way of interpreting their immediate and more general surroundings, such that they 'figure' out the worlds in which they operate and find a personal and professional identity for themselves. This 'figuring out' is confirmed by Ribbins and Gunter (2002:372), who note that educational leadership is "a mediated activity or, more precisely, a field of knowledge", and this suggests that in being 'mediated' such leadership is responsive to the social context in which it is occurring. Clearly, therefore, the study of educational leadership falls into the category of social science research, and discussing such research, Tarhoni (2011:92) observes that a range of methods are available, but the one selected must take into account of "the subject under investigation, the theoretical orientation of the study, the timescale available, and accessibility to the study subjects".

An approach which brings the leaders (research sample) into close contact with the researcher, and allows for a social encounter that produces rich data, is the best one to adopt to secure personal histories, and this scenario points to the need for a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach. Quantitative designs aim to measure phenomena by using numbers, and statistical techniques (Punch, 2000; Gilbert, 2001). To reach the 'truth', means to identify the objective fact relating to a situation. This, as already mentioned, is not appropriate for an interpretivist design, which must by nature seek to establish the reality for the participants through their descriptions in words. In considering the nature of qualitative research, Creswell (2014:4) notes it to be:

> "a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants' setting, data analysis inductively building from particular to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data."

In qualitative research, data is acquired from individuals or groups by meeting with them, or observing them in their natural surroundings, and by being both flexible and sensitive to those surroundings. Researchers then use their own powers of interpretation to analyse that data. Their interest is in understanding why and how people behave in a particular way, rather than in testing hypotheses through the use of statistical tests (Al-Balushi, 2012), which is the tradition in quantitative research. From qualitative data, it is possible for researchers to gain information about the lifestyles of the individuals they are observing. In this respect, Vygotsky (1980) argues that when people are allowed to use words to relate their stories in interview situations, they find it easier to explore

their own consciousness and are encouraged to provide honest accounts of their life experiences. Haralambos and Holborn (2013) note the same effect when individuals are asked to produce written transcripts of their life history. From this it can be seen that qualitative data is collected through interviews, and written transcripts; and as Punch (2014) observes, it is also obtained via documentation and other personal material. The point to be appreciated is that it all represents empirical information.

In the context of leadership, the qualitative approach helps leaders to "tease out meanings and assumptions associated with leadership and to offer a grounded interpretation of what leadership means" (Bresnen, 1995:505), assuming that "meaning is embedded in people's experiences" (Merriam, 2001:6), as certain experience is "lived" or "felt" or "undergone"(Sherman and Webb, 1988).

Therefore, one could argue that qualitative research deals with perceptions, attitudes and experiences that are placed in specific circumstances. Consequently, it can be recognised that concepts such as 'experiences', 'perceptions', 'roles', and 'identity' are not quantifiable and need to be studied from the informants' perspectives which as noted by Pak (2007:65), is "sometimes referred to as the insider's perspective, and not the researcher's or outsider's perspective". Pak (2007) goes on to use this observation as a justification for employing the qualitative approach.

It can be seen that such methods enable researchers to gain a strong insight into leadership practice since they allow them to obtain answers to 'what?' 'where?' and 'why?' questions (Denscombe, 2014), which cannot be obtained from quantitative designs that force answers by using closed questions and restricting answer choices. Moreover, they allow leadership to be considered in real-life situations, and as noted by Inman (2014), leadership is highly context specific. Consequently, qualitative approaches lend authenticity to the study of leadership, providing, as observed by Haralambos and Holborn (2013:793), data which are usually seen as "richer, more vital, as having greater depth and as more likely to present a true picture of a way of life, of people's experiences, attitudes and beliefs".

From the aims and research questions associated with this study, it is clear that the purpose of the study is to gain and analyse the life histories of senior leaders. In this regard, it could be said that "everyone has stories to tell ... and life history helps to remind us of this, as it also shows how individual lives are affected by when, where, how and by whom (in social positioning terms) they are lived" (Goodson and Sikes,

2001:4). Giddens (2009:58) argues that the life history approach "belongs purely to sociology and social sciences [and] … has no place in natural science". It requires that past events are considered and reflected upon chronologically such that the experience gained over time is appreciated as something which moulds future thought and action, and in the context of leadership, this produces information concerning how leaders actually learn to lead. With such knowledge and understanding, it is possible to make educated decisions about leadership development (Ribbins and Gunter, 2002), whether it be precisely to do with educational leadership or leadership in any other field.

The method also provides the opportunity for face-to-face contact between informants and the researcher, giving more room for the researcher to explore and understand specific details regarding the topic investigated, and to make use of non-verbal signals which are not present in quantitative approaches.

Clearly, qualitative research provides several advantages over quantitative approaches in the very specific setting of educational leadership, and therefore, this approach to the collection of data for the study will be adopted.

3.5 Research Methods

Having decided on the use of a qualitative approach, the next decision to be made relates to the means of obtaining data. In fact, the majority of studies to date have used in-depth interviews as the primary method of data gathering. For example, Bryman (2004) found from a meta-analysis of 72 studies of qualitative research into leadership, that 62 of these had used semi- or unstructured interviews as their main method of data collection. Seidman (2013:9) confirms that interviewing can help "in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience", and as this study aims to identify how senior leaders learn to lead and the circumstances they experienced that shaped their professional identity, interviewing can be understood as being highly appropriate.

Interviewing, however, is not an easy option as it demands skill on the part of the researcher. In this respect, Seidman (2013) observes that the 'interview' is a friendly, purposeful, and managed conversation, the effectiveness of which, depends substantially on the communication skills possessed by the interviewer. These skills include the ability to structure questions clearly and cohesively (Punch, 2005), to listen

carefully and to pause, probe or prompt as appropriate (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), to encourage the interviewee to talk freely (Denscombe, 2014), and to build trust, rapport and co-operation between the informant and the interviewer (Gwartney, 2007). Interviewing also requires sensitivity on the part of the researcher such that s/he can appreciate non-verbal signals which may indicate the interviewee's discomfort, and it demands great skills of analysis and synthesis during the interpretation of the data (Tarhoni, 2011). Indeed the data collected can be far more than required, especially in unstructured interviews so it is important to give adequate consideration to the decision as to which type of interview to opt for, so as not to end up with the daunting task of deciding what data is irrelevant.

Schostak (2005:10) considers the nature of the interview, observing that it "can be described in terms of individuals directing their attention towards each other with the purpose of opening up the possibility of gaining an insight into the experiences, concerns, interests, beliefs, values, knowledge and ways of seeing, thinking and acting of the other". And Seidman (2013) confirms that the method allows a researcher to gain insight into the context of people's behaviour, meaning that individuals' actions can be interpreted according to the particular circumstances prevailing at the time. The point is made by (Blumer, 1969) that the meaning given by individuals to their experience subsequently affects the way in which they continue to behave. Hence, it is important to establish what meaning individuals do attach to their experience, and interviewing is the best way to find out such details, and thus obtain a greater understanding of others' behaviour.

That said, interviewing has disadvantages as well as benefits, as identified by many writers (see for example, Seidman, 2013; Silverman, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2013), and it is necessary to consider these in turn.

In respect of the advantages, Denscombe (2014) in particular, has commented on these as being associated with a number of factors. Firstly, he mentions the fact that interviews can provide in-depth information as the researcher is able to probe issues and pursue them as appropriate. Secondly, there is the benefit that as data is collected from selected key informants, one can realistically expect insights about the topics discussed to be gained. A third advantage is that the interview is a flexible instrument which allows the interviewer to make adjustments during the process in order to develop lines of inquiry further, and a fourth is that there is a high response rate with interviews, as they are pre-arranged and scheduled for a convenient time and location. A fifth benefit

lies in the fact that data can be checked for accuracy and relevance as they are collected, thereby giving validity to the process, and a sixth concerns the fact that interviews are therapeutic, as they can be a rewarding experience for the informants, especially spending time reflecting about their life stories.

Cohen et al. (2013:267) also noted that "interviews enable participants … to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In these senses the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable". Hence, the interview has the very definite advantage that it can generate highly detailed insights from informants, giving them the chance to discuss their own interpretations of the issue being investigated as well allowing them to make sense of their social world. The value of such insights should not be under-estimated neither for the researcher nor the interviewee, since with even greater understanding of their own situation, interviewees can provide even more explanatory data.

Naturally, however, there are disadvantages to the interview method, and in this respect, Denscombe (2014) cites the following factors:

- Time-consuming - data analysing, transcribing and coding is predicted to be lengthy.
- Data analysis - non-standard responses make it difficult to compare data.
- Reliability – data gathered are unique relating to specific contexts and the specific individuals involved.
- Interviewer effect – the data collected are based on what the interviewees say rather than what they do or did, and these two positions may be different.
- Invasion of privacy – data collected could be seen as very personal.
- Resources – the costs of interviewer time and travel can be expensive especially if the informants are geographically dispersed.

Additionally, as noted by Ribbins (2003), it is possible to misinterpret interviewees' "views by claiming they have said something that they did not but also by selectively

reporting their words to suggest that they have said something they did not intend" (Ribbins, 2003:208).

So, it can be understood that the interview technique brings both benefits and drawbacks to the researcher, but that on balance, when qualitative accounts of people's experiences are required, this is the most suitable strategy, provided that the interviewer possesses the appropriate skills to conduct interviews and to analyse the data obtained from them.

In respect of the entire interview process, Fontana and Frey (1994) offer advice, suggesting that the researcher must take account of seven different factors in the planning and execution of interviews. Firstly, they need to be able to access the setting; secondly, they must be able to understand the language and culture of respondents; thirdly, they have to decide how to present themselves; fourthly, they need to be able to locate suitable interviewees; fifthly, they need to gain the trust of those prepared to participate; sixthly, they must possess the skills to establish rapport; and finally, they must ensure they collect the required empirical materials. Clearly, therefore, the researcher planning to use the interview as a data collection tool must be adequately prepared and skilled to conduct the process efficiently and effectively.

Having considered the comments and guidance in the literature, the researcher has opted to use in-depth biographical interviews for this study. The decision in this respect, has not been arrived at randomly but rather because this type of approach can be seen as the most suitable method for a study of this kind since it offers a reliable data-gathering method from individuals in an atmosphere which can be controlled by the researcher to ensure comfort and security for the interviewees. Moreover, the in-depth interview helps in obtaining detailed answers from interviewees to various questions which they might not be able to answer objectively by the use of a different method. Hence, the approach is believed to provide answers to the research questions associated with the study.

Goodson and Sikes (2001) also describe the one-to-one interview conversation as the most common strategy for gathering life history data. They refer to this conversation as a 'ground conversation' which requires the researcher to use a range of techniques in order to achieve the required aim. One of these important techniques concerns the establishment and maintenance of a positive and trusting relationship between interviewer and participant. In discussing this relationship, Goodson and Sikes

(2001:28) point to "personal dynamics in life history work", implying that researchers should share their own experiences and perceptions with interviewees. Supporting the development of these 'personal dynamics', Goodson and Sikes (2001) also point to the need to try to create commonalities between interviewer and interviewee by the former trying to wear similar clothes, professing similar interests and lifestyles, and using similar language as the latter. In this work, in-depth interviews are employed and open-ended questions are addressed based on issues identified from the literature review and from the researcher's observation as a Higher Education lecturer and leader. Using the life history method is appropriate when a researcher is asking "why", "how", "what is it like" and "what does it mean to you"? (ibid: 22). In addition, this approach (life history) together with this method (interview) make it possible to link the personal experience of senior leaders (deans) with the current situation they live in, since "the stories people tell, from each perspective, are not isolated, individual affairs but reflect and constitute the dialects of power relations and competing truths within the wider society" (Bron and West, 2000:159). In a similar context, Goodson (1992:241) clarifies that "the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity". Therefore, in choosing a life history approach, regardless of "the content of a person's account, meaning is created through understanding the sequence of events within the full 'trajectory' of a particular life history".

All of these pointers are borne in mind in the interviewing process connected with this study in order to obtain the most fruitful data possible. Appendix 5 contains the interview protocol.

3.6 The Research Sample

Having decided on the means of gathering the empirical data, it is now pertinent to consider the nature of the research sample – who is to be involved, in what numbers, and why. In this respect, it is the life history methodology that determines the way forward since life history interviews characteristically take a long time, yield large volumes of data, and require many hours of transcription and analysis. The length of the interview is not susceptible to manipulation by the researcher since it is not possible to ask a participant to relate his/her life experience and then curtail that person's ability to tell the story by bringing the interview to a close simply because it is running over some pre-imagined period of time allocated to the exercise. Consequently, life history

research samples tend to be quite small in recognition that the data collected will be lengthy, and that some limitations on the time for transcription and analysis are likely to arise. In this respect, Hee (2007) makes the point that large samples are impractical in qualitative research of this nature. However, against this general appreciation of the idea that certain types of qualitative research can produce excessive data, there is still no one definitive guide for a researcher. In this regard, Goodson and Sikes (2001:23) argue that it is impossible to tell how many participants should be involved, because "so much depends on the aims of the research, on the topic, and on what is actually possible". They justified their claims by saying that "many life histories, including most of the 'original', 'foundation', or 'germinal' ones, undertaken by members of the Chicago school in the 1920s and 1930s, were of one person and aimed to give detailed insights into specific individuals' perceptions and experience of their life" (ibid:23). They then went further, saying that "if the aim is to reveal shared patterns of experience or interpretation within a group of people who have some characteristics, attribute or experience in common, then ideally sample size will be adequate when sufficient data have been collected and saturation occurs and variation is both accounted for and understood … In qualitative research, the investigator samples until repetition from multiple sources is obtained" (Morse, 1994:230).

Clearly, adequacy depends mainly on the richness of data and on the aspect of life being examined rather than on quantity. As noted by Marshall et al. (2013:11), "estimating adequate sample size is directly related to the concept of saturation". Saturation is defined as "data adequacy and operationalized as collecting data until no new information is obtained" (Morse, 1994:147). However, the question of how a researcher knows when saturation has been achieved remains. In this respect, Marshall et al. (2013:11) note that saturation "entails bringing new participants continually into the study until the data set is complete, as indicated by data replication or redundancy. In other words, saturation is reached when the researcher gathers data to the point of diminishing returns, when nothing new is being added". Still, the questions which pose themselves in this context are: what could be the estimated sample size required to achieve saturation, and when could the researcher know how much data is enough? In this regard, Morse (1994:147) argues that "there are no published guidelines or tests of adequacy for estimating the sample size required to reach saturation", and Patton (2015:243) agrees, suggesting that "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry,

what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources".

However, Marshall et al. (2013) suggest that saturation in qualitative research can be established in three ways. The first is by following the recommendations made in the literature by other qualitative researchers, the second is by referring to sample sizes in other studies with common designs, and the third is by demonstrating statistically that saturation has occurred within a given data set. The first two ways are considered to provide external justification for the establishment of saturation, and the last is believed to offer internal justification. In the absence of any more concrete guidance, these 'tests' would seem to be reasonable.

For this study, the second of these strategies is adopted, that is to say, other writers' experience of certain sample sizes is taken into account. Tierney (2010), for example, in research entitled 'Globalisation and Life History Research', chose a sample of only one, Parker (2002) work on headship used a sample size of three, whereas Pak (2007) conducted a study entitled 'Leadership in Higher Education: The Hong Kong Experience' that used 14 informants, after his supervisors suggested that a reasonable number of participants in in-depth interviews would be between 12 and 15. Inman (2014) also conducted a study on leadership under the title 'The Significance of Life History in Reviewing Leadership Learning within Higher Education', using a sample of 18, and similarly, research by entitled 'The Personal and Professional Circumstances that lead Academics to become Middle Managers' relied on a total of 17 informants.

Clearly, there is no answer to "the question of how many people to interview … what is needed is an adequate number of participants, sites, or activities to answer the question posed at the beginning of the study" (Merriam, 1998:64). In this respect, the experience of the researcher is also of importance since if s/he is a member of the community being researched, it may be that saturation is reached earlier than in circumstances where the researcher is an 'outsider' as his/her ability to appreciate whether what is being said by different interviewees is the same or otherwise.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the aim of this study is to show how selected senior leaders learn to lead, but there are two research samples required in order to meet the aim and answer the research questions, as a comparison between the UK and Libyan scenarios is undertaken. Considering the objective of answering the research questions, it is not necessary to be able to generalise the findings to a wider population of leaders

or indeed to a population of other types of leader (heads of department, for example) within educational establishments. The sample size can, therefore, be relatively small, but should be large enough to make certain generalisations to other leaders in the same category (i.e. senior leaders). So, based on other researchers' sample sizes and the opinions of some methodologists, it is concluded that semi-structured biographical interviews with six informants in a UK university, and similar interviews with six informants in a Libyan university could be appropriate for this study.

Because of the need to explore the effect of life history on the twelve informants (senior leaders in HE in both Libya, and the UK), and to establish their perceptions of how they developed their leadership abilities, and what shaped their professional identities, it was necessary to develop certain criteria to ensure that participants had sufficiently long careers as senior leaders to reflect back on. Essentially, the focus was on oral histories in a biographical sense, and therefore, established senior leaders (deans) with a career history and who had had some formal leadership roles in HE organisations were the main selection conditions. The rationale for this was to capture a range of career stages from early career through mid-career to late career as a way to explore what Holland et al. (1998) argue is an important aspect of identity construction, the sociohistorical context. However, despite the fact that the sample of this research does not represent the wider population and is, therefore, "selective and biased" (Cohen et al., 2013:164) it is still satisfactory because the aim is not to generalise findings to the wider population but to offer an understanding into how particular individuals learnt to lead, which then, as Inman (2007) states, could be related to others.

It is also important to document that whilst ideally, a sample containing male and female senior leaders is desirable, the particular circumstances of Libya prevented this and the sample is in fact, comprised entirely of males. Cultural imperatives in Libya make it difficult for women to accept leadership positions, since in occupying such roles they would be required to participate in many face-to-face meetings with male strangers and this is not permitted on religious grounds, without an intermediary or chaperone to ensure the female's integrity. Additionally, the job of dean is extremely time-consuming, and again for a woman this would be difficult to manage given other domestic and social duties which are accorded equal if not more importance than those in the workplace. And it must also be recorded that since the revolution in 2011, there has been a continued lack of security within the country, meaning that all individuals

(but especially women) are extremely reluctant to place themselves in any leadership role as this raises their profile and makes them a target.

3.7 Piloting and Validity of the Interview Protocol

In the interests of achieving responses that will provide answers to the research questions, and hence, allow the study aims to be met; and as a means of providing some indication of how long the interviews might take so that participants can be adequately prepared, piloting was undertaken with a small number of individuals who are considered to be representative of the two different research populations. Piloting is considered as developmental work, intended to ensure that the researcher is satisfied that the particular instrument s/he has constructed is adequately tested (Gilbert, 2001). This type of testing is described by Robson (2002:383) as a "dummy run" since its aim is to throw up any likely problems during the data collection before the major part of a study is conducted.

At the same time, when used in the specific instance of testing the appropriateness of interview questions, it can be claimed that the exercise adds validity to the eventual research protocol used with the major research population, since the questions are verified by presenting them to representatives of that population, and making any amendments as deemed necessary in response to comments which those representatives offer. Questions which are inappropriate, or duplicate others, are removed from a protocol upon receipt of feedback from participants in a pilot study, with the result that an interview schedule can be streamlined and presented more efficiently and effectively.

In this study, a small pilot exercise was conducted with one dean at the UK research site, and another one at the Libyan research site, to ensure the meaningfulness of the interview protocol to the likely participants, and to establish how long interviews might take so that participants could be given some advance indication of the time they would be expected to devote to the study.

The pilot study was conducted in a way to mirror the proposed administration of the eventual interview exercise. One face-to-face interview was held with each of the two participants, and they were clearly informed that the interviews would be in depth, and expected to last for approximately one and one and a half hours. In fact, the predicted timing was correct.

The two deans participating in the pilot were approached by email, given the necessary detailed explanations of the research, the themes and areas of interest to be pursued, and an assurance that their identities would be kept anonymous and that the information they provided would be kept strictly confidential. Additionally, they were asked to confirm their willingness to participate. Each interview took place at the respective deans' place of work for their convenience. With their approval, the interviews were audio-taped and detailed supplementary notes were also taken by hand, during the process. At the end of each interview, the participants were asked to provide their feedback regarding the interview as a whole – the interview guide, the questions asked, and the way in which it had been conducted. The comments were noted, and suggestions made by the two deans were taken into consideration, resulting in some changes to the interview questions. Subject to those amendments, the deans believed the interview protocol would be completely appropriate for the wider sample.

3.8 Conducting the Interviews

Using the research sample reported in Section 3.6, interviews were carried out mainly on a one-to-one basis at the senior leaders' workplace. In this case, the choice to conduct the interviews at the participants' workplaces was based on two reasons. One was related to the logistics of arranging interviews with more than one senior leader in different faculties, but mainly due to the nature of the issues to be discussed, and the need to encourage the self-disclosure required to obtain life histories, and insights into the participants' 'figured worlds'. Such a need demanded that participants feel safe and secure, sufficiently so to be comfortable in narrating potential sensitive details. The use of private, one-to-one interviews in surroundings familiar to the deans created an environment conducive to self-disclosure. Moreover, the arrangement of the interviews at participants' place of work allowed me to gain an understanding of their day-to-day professional world. For instance, by arriving some time earlier than the scheduled meetings, I was able to observe whether those leaders' workplaces were calm or chaotic, organised or disorganised, formal or informal, and such observations provided useful insights

As all participants had been approached by email and given the necessary detailed explanations of the research, and the themes and areas of interest to be pursued in the interviews, it seemed unnecessary to provide a specific interview guide prior to or

during the interview. Indeed, this had been confirmed by the pilot study. Consequently, the interviewees were simply asked to re-affirm their consent to be tape-recorded before starting the process. As noted by Rubin and Rubin (2012), audio recorders and note-taking are the most common methods of recording interview data; in this case, the interviews were recorded on a digital Dictaphone and backed up by handwritten notes taken at the time to emphasise important contextual factors, since digital audio tape only captures speech. The interviewees were also informed that the interview recordings would be kept securely and not be made available to anyone other than my research supervisors and myself.

In the event, all interviews proceeded without major interruptions despite the fact that they lasted between one to one and half hours. Also, although there were differences in responses among the interviewees in terms of clarity, I was able to interrupt the process when necessary to ask for clarification. The majority of respondents provided rich, thoughtful, fruitful, and interesting reflections.

Since the interviewees were undertaken in two different countries, they were conducted in the language of each. In the UK, the interviews were undertaken in English despite the fact that English is not my first language. However, since I have been studying in the UK for some years, the interviewees' style of speech and accent was very clear to me. In Libya, the interviews were conducted in Arabic language, the mother tongue of both myself and the participants. Thereafter those interviews were translated into English, and given that I hold an MA degree in translation, I performed the translation myself and experienced no difficulties in doing so.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

When conducting any research, it is essential to consider the ethics of the activities which the researcher intends to perform, and once a research methodology is determined, it is desirable for some corporate body, usually an ethics committee, to scrutinise this in an attempt to ensure that no person is harmed in any way as a result of their participation in a study. Consequently, when using the in-depth interview as a research technique, issues concerning how ethically the technique is employed is of importance. Pope and Mays (2006) note that three main questions must be satisfied when undertaking qualitative research, these being that participants must be assured of anonymity, that the information they provide will remain confidential, and that they are

aware that their participation is voluntary and are subsequently asked to give their consent in the full knowledge of the research objectives and all that the investigation entails of them. That said, it is not always possible to guarantee total anonymity, and consequently it is necessary to be honest with participants to ensure that their agreement to take part is not secured on false information. In this connection, Lichtman (2013:53) advises researchers to "remove identifying information from your records. Seek permission from the participants if you wish to make public information that might reveal who they are and who the organisation is". As with anonymity, it may also not be possible to fully protect the confidentiality of information revealed, since as Pope and Mays (2006:53) observes "in qualitative research, in contrast to quantitative research, individual respondents' responses - often their exact words - are reproduced". Again, Lichtman (2013:53) states that the bottom line for all researchers is to ensure that the information they gain remains confidential, and that "if you sense that an individual is in an emergency situation, you might decide that you can waive your promise for the good of the individual or of others. You need to be much more sensitive to information that you obtain from minors and others who might be in a vulnerable position". And finally, in respect of informed consent, Pope and Mays (2006:53) raise the question of how 'informed' such consent can actually be, and give researchers the following advice

> "make sure that participants are informed, to the extent possible, about the nature of your study. Even though it is not always possible to describe the direction your study might take, it is your responsibility to do the best you can to provide complete information. If participants decide to withdraw from the study, they should not feel penalized for doing so".

This is an important point, which directs researchers to tell all potential participants at the very start of a study that they are free to leave whenever they wish, and to do so without giving a reason for their decision.

It is proposed by Mason (2002) that ethical considerations require the ultimate aim of a study to be clear from the start such that any potential consequences to the participants are immediately more obvious. Additionally, particularly in respect of interviewing, Sarantakos (2012) highlights the need for questions that might cause participants embarrassment or regret, or appear to be threatening in nature, to be avoided completely.

As a general comment, ethical conduct on the part of the researcher is about ensuring all participants know their rights, which according to Silverman et al. (2005:88) involve

"the right to privacy or non-participation, the right to remain anonymous, the right to confidentiality and the right to expect experimenter responsibility".

In respect of the current study, the nature of the research (how leaders lead), its context (HE), and the strategy for data collection, pose no problems in ethical terms, but the type of data gathered (personal information) and the use to which that data is put (a thesis for public consumption) does need to be considered because "it is not always possible to know when a topic or issue will turn to be sensitive" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001:96). Consequently, the researcher took all steps to maintain informants' anonymity, to anonymise all responses, and to keep the data secure and available only for himself and his supervisors. Additionally, all respondents were fully informed of the aims and objectives of the research, and told of their ability to withdraw at any point without prejudice. Proper procedures were instituted to guarantee the protection of storage of research data, and the data will be destroyed six months after the study is effectively concluded and examined. Hence, to confirm, the study was performed according to BERA's ethical guidelines and all fieldwork took place in accordance with the MMU Academic Ethical Framework, which included obtaining full ethical approval before starting the empirical fieldwork.

3.10 Data Analysis: The Thematic Approach

The method of data analysis is a logical outcome of the research questions and the approach used to gather data, and it should be as transparent as possible to indicate the academic rigour of research (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009). Given the qualitative design of this study, and the collection of words subsequently converted from audio data into text, a thematic approach to its analysis was adopted.

Thematic analysis, according to Denscombe (2003:292), is described as when "the researcher begins to identify relationships between codes or categories of the data or becomes aware of patterns of themes within the data." It, according to Braun and Clarke (2006:79), involves "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail." One might well argue at this point, that all qualitative studies include in one way or another, some form of thematic analysis during a search for patterns, groups or categories of arising themes. This approach, however, often "goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of

the research topic" (ibid: 79). The use of themes to interpret answers received is valuable in that the researcher can continually refer to the data to search for relevance to the themes of interest, and indeed this process can identify which themes are more significant than others. The procedure can thus be seen as a systematic one that preserves the data after its collection, and that can be interrogated as many times as required to establish the strength of a particular theme, and highlight emergent ideas.

This thematic underpinning to data analysis enables, as noted by Riessman (2005), the researcher to propose theories in instances where several different cases are involved, since it allows commonalities in what participants report to be documented and, therefore, the building of theory. In this study, thematic analysis is appropriate as there are different cases (the individual deans from two cultural contexts), yet they all reflect on the same thing – their life histories, their lived experience, their 'figured worlds', and how their professional identity has been shaped by these. The identity framework proposed by Holland et al. (1998) is helpful in establishing the participants' 'figured worlds' as it includes reference to the "wider institutional and cultural discourses – not usually studied" (Riessman, 2005:3). Moreover, thematic analysis also helps to illuminate differences arising from cultural context and predispositions.

Thematic analysis is not, however, as straightforward as it might at first appear, as it does not represent a one-step process in which the researcher simply groups together reports of the same phenomenon. Rather, it must be appreciated that as that data is represented, there are several voices, story layers, and constructions. Scholars describe story-telling as 'multi-layered' and 'multi-voiced' such that in any written text, there are many commentators and many layers of meaning (see for example, McAdams and McLean (2013); Mercer (2007); Trahar (2013). Creaby (2016) adds to these arguments, referring to the concept of 'heteroglossia' - the multiplicity of voices (sometimes coming just from the one storyteller), - which occurs when people speak of themselves and thus become authors of their own stories. Consequently, as argued by Josselson (2011a), the analysis of an interview transcript represents another voice in the narration, involving a level of interpretation, and another layer of meaning. Every single aspect is interpretive, "as everything implies meanings" (Josselson, 2011a:38).

From this it can be appreciated that the thematic analysis that results is not an analysis of one or more individuals, but rather an analysis of a set of texts (interview transcripts); and as observed by Josselson (2011a:151), there are difficulties in the relationship

between an individual and the text of his/her story as there are bound to be "gaps between the meanings of experience (the participant's understanding of his or her life) and the authority of expertise (the researcher's interpretive analysis of that life)". Consequently, the meanings suggested by researchers are the result of their interpretations of the texts obtained. What can be added, however, is that when the researcher is present and part of the original storytelling (even if purely as a listener), there is a better chance of his/her interpretations of the eventual text being closer to what the storyteller him/herself understood from the story, than when the researcher approaches a text that s/he has not previously been involved in.

3.11 Data Analysis: The Process

As indicated above, the analysis began during the data collection stage, beginning with the transcription of each interview immediately after it was conducted, and a process of reflection upon the process and the story obtained, before proceeding to the next interview. The element of reflection was undertaken by both the researcher and the interviewee concerned, and contributed towards the process of constructing the texts eventually obtained.

Braun and Clarke (2006) note that analysis starts when the analyst begins to notice, and look for, patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data, and this may be during the actual data collection. Likewise, Gehart et al. (2007) suggest that analysis is present during the entire research process, and is not a separate activity that commences once data has been gathered. The analysis of a story, according to Josselson (2011b:228), "involves gaining an overall sense of meaning and then examining the parts in relation to it, which will involve changing our understanding of the whole until we arrive at a holistic understanding that best encompasses the meanings of the parts".

To clarify the process involved in thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006:87) outlined a six-step procedure as follows.

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts generating (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), clear definitions and names for each theme.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006:87)

This model offers practical guidance, and consequently, it was adopted as the process for thematic data analysis in this study. On a practical level, once the data were collected, they were transcribed, and although this was time-consuming, and often frustrating and sometimes boring, it did nonetheless, as indicated by Riessman (1993), helped me to familiarise myself with the data. Bird (2005:227) even argued that transcribing is "a key phase of the data analysis within interpretive qualitative methodology". For the process of transcription, oTranscribe web, which is a tool designed to make transcription easier, was used. In one window, I could navigate the audio file and text document with the keys on my keyboard. No mouse pad swiping and tapping was required. More importantly, oTranscribe is designed in a way that the data (the audio file and the written transcript) never leaves the computer where it is used, hence making it a perfect tool for maintaining informants' anonymity; and in this case, it was used on my personal laptop which is password-protected for security reasons, and accessible only by myself.

Since I was solely responsible for collecting and transcribing the data, I came to the analysis with some prior knowledge and some initial analytical interests and thoughts. However, regardless of this knowledge, I followed the advice of Braun and Clarke

(2006), who argue that researchers must be completely immersed in their data so they can internalise it in terms of both depth and breadth. They recommend that the researcher repeatedly re-reads the data, continually looking for patterns, and meanings. Consequently, despite the volume of the data from both research sites (UK and Libya) and the time it would take to engage in constant re-reading of the transcripts, I did follow the recommendation of Braun and Clarke (2006:87), who argued that this phase "provides the bedrock for the rest of the analysis".

During this reading process, the initial ideas concerning the codes arose. This stage is considered vital because it is at this point when the data is organised into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005). It involved going through the entire data and identifying and grouping the interesting aspects which I thought might be the foundation of the recurring patterns (themes). Seidman (2013:120) states that "researchers acknowledge that in this stage of the process they are exercising judgement about what is significant in the transcript". Therefore, coding as Saldaña (2015) indicates, is not only labelling; rather it involves linking words with meaning and, therefore, "leads you from the data to the idea and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea" (Richards and Morse, 2012:154).

Once all the data had been coded and organised, the next step was to look for relationships between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes. In some cases, some codes were considered as themes and others as sub-themes. In other cases, they were abandoned. This phase was crucial as I started to sense the importance of the individual themes. Commonalities were highlighted within each of the themes, and differences were also noted whenever they occurred. Then, the themes were refined. I was able to distinguish between themes and non-themes. At certain times, I merged two themes into one, and separated one single theme into sub-themes. At the end of this stage, I was able to clearly see my different themes and sub-themes fitting together nicely and telling a story about the data.

From this initial overall structure, I defined the themes to be presented in the analysis and refined them, doing what Braun and Clarke (2006:92) describe as "identifying the 'essence' of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures". In this phase, I also began to think about how to name these themes in a concise and sensible way so that they could be meaningfully presented in the final analysis. Although I had already accorded working

titles to the themes, I aimed for greater precision in conveying their meaning. The final stage of the analysis was writing-up the story of my data which included some extracts embedded within the analytic to illustrate the story. This analytic went beyond data description and made arguments in relation to my research questions.

3.12 The Position of the Researcher

There has been much discussion as to the value and significance of both insider and outsider researcher positions (Hayfield and Huxley, 2015). Gair (2012) describes the 'insider' researcher as someone who is a member of the same group to which the research sample come from. This implies that s/he possesses the same characteristics, for example, ethnicity, sexual identity, gender, profession, and/or culture/sub-culture, while an 'outsider' does not, and hence does not qualify for membership of that group (Gair, 2012). It is necessary to consider the position occupied by the researcher in respect of the insider/outsider dimension (LaSala, 2003 and Watts, 2006), because that determines how s/he relates to the research sample, and the knowledge which is derived from the research encounter. It therefore, has an epistemological outcome (Griffith, 1998).

Mercer (2007:4) addresses the complex nature of the insider/outsider dichotomy, maintaining that a certain instability exists in relation to the boundaries between the two positions, and that in fact all people are "multiple insiders and outsiders ... moving back and forth across different boundaries ... as situations involving different values arise, different statuses are activated and the lines of separation shift'. This gives rise to the idea that the polar concept of insider/outsider does not in fact exist, and that rather it is best to appreciate the relationship as something which sits on a continuum ranging from greater to little familiarity with the situation being investigated (Chavez, 2008 and Mercer, 2007). Indeed, it is clear that a researcher may share certain aspects of his/her identity (such as gender, ethnicity, professional and academic qualifications) with the research sample, yet have no features in common with the particular issues being investigated (Mercer, 2007). Furthermore, as observed by Mercer (2007), the issues that are not in common occur at both the macro and micro level, being the result of the context, circumstances, and time period, in which the research is nestled. These factors are influential in terms of the power dynamics among the individuals involved and the subjects being explored. It is often mistakenly assumed that researchers have power

over those in the sample (Floyd and Arthur, 2012). Of course, especially in terms of institutional research, this mistake is very obvious:

> "Being an insider means being embedded in a shared setting (Smyth and Holian, 2008), emotionally connected to the research participants (Sikes 2008), with a feel for the game and the hidden rules (Bourdieu, 1998). Insider status may confer privileged access and information, but the researcher's position in an organisation may also act as a constraint, limiting who is willing to participate and what is revealed (Smyth and Holian, 2008)" (cited in Floyd and Arthur, 2012:173).

As someone who has made a career in HE, held the post of head of department, and more recently that of dean, I could be classed as an insider. Indeed, arguably, it is not possible for any researcher to divorce him/herself from the historical and cultural context of a study because both the 'subject' and 'object of the research are in worlds that are understood in advance (Gadamer, 1973, cited in Inman 2007). At the same time, it should be recognised that insider status can confer several advantages, one being that in qualitative research, it is easier for the researcher with such status to design research questions, interview schedules, gain access to potential participants, and be successful in their recruitment (Perry et al., 2004). Additionally, during the data gathering, analysis, and interpretation phases, the background knowledge and understanding of the insider promotes valuable insight, that often eludes the outsider. This level of insight places insider researchers in a good place to ensure that their studies are conducted ethically, and that those participants who may be marginalised by institutional/organisational structures are not ignored (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Gair, 2012).

These advantages of insider status were all obtained as a result of my previous experience within HE and especially in positions of academic leadership such as those of Head of Department and Dean. Moreover, it has to be acknowledged that Libya remains in a state of civil unrest and there is no current tradition of trust between people who are effectively strangers to each other, making it difficult for an outsider to enter any research site and seriously expect people to participate and divulge information of any nature. Being an insider afforded me the opportunity to find a ready sample of willing participants and where necessary, personal contacts who could vouch for me as a bona fide researcher with no agenda other than to try to raise support for the role of senior academic leaders, were able to identify other deans who were prepared to be part of my study. Hence, there were no problems of access to the research sample. At the

same time, it is also important to emphasise that this level of trust promoted a robust relationship during the interviews, which facilitated the data gathering in as much as the participants genuinely felt comfortable when answering questions and discussing certain issues with me, and were able to express themselves honestly without fear of any repercussions. In the prevailing Libyan climate, it is hard to find genuine co-operation from research participants, and the ability to use personal contacts and recommendations from those contacts was invaluable.

3.13 Validity and Reliability of the Research

Reliability and validity are important concepts to be considered by qualitative researchers, and have meaning for the design of a study, the analysis of results, and the overall evaluation of the study's quality (Patton, 2015). Lincoln and Guba (1985:316) discuss the relationship between these concepts, noting that "since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability]". Reliability is concerned with the extent to which a test or procedure generates similar outcomes under constant conditions on all occasions, whereas validity demonstrates whether a study measures or describes what it aims to measure or describe (Bell, 2014). Hence, a study which is unreliable is also invalid, but a reliable study is not necessarily also valid (Kiritsis, 2009). According to Bryman and Bell (2015), validity is a key factor in all research; likewise according to Stenbacka (2001:551), reliability is a key factor in qualitative research and must be present "in order to claim a study as part of proper research".

Kiritsis (2009) makes the point that it is impossible to achieve absolutely reliable and valid results. However, many steps can be taken to ensure the best possible result emerges in terms of both reliability and validity, and in this study, the use of the following strategies will help to maximise the validity and reliability of the findings. Firstly, the face-to-face in-depth interviews will help in gaining a deep insight into the perceptions of the senior leaders and their roles. Secondly, the literature review will provide the backbone upon which the researcher can base a solid argumentative ground since the material published comes from rigorous academic studies. And finally, the pilot study undertaken before the real field study will ensure that the eventual questions asked are appropriate and designed to secure answers to the research questions, and hence, allow the study aims to be met.

3.14 Conclusion

The chapter has shown in detail, how the empirical work undertaken to achieve the aim and objectives of the study, was designed and executed, and how the data obtained from that fieldwork was treated during the analysis phase. It has been made clear that the type of knowledge required to answer the research questions lay in the humanistic domain, the implications of this being that it was necessary to adopt a philosophical underpinning that allowed for the interpretation of data as opposed to the positivist tradition of counting cases and testing theory with the results. Consequently, the justification for adopting the interpretivist paradigm, and the accompanying qualitative approach to data gathering via an interview exercise, has been provided. In an effort to demonstrate the academic rigour of the study, details of the initial piloting of the interview schedule have been given, and full information regarding the chosen sample have also been provided. A detailed account of how the interviews proper were conducted is also presented, and the way in which the data were systematically analysed, using codes and identifying themes has been thoroughly discussed. Issues concerning validity, reliability, the researcher' position, and the ethical considerations surrounding the study have been addressed. Consequently, a comprehensive picture of the preparation for and execution of the empirical work has been provided.

In the full understanding that the data obtained has emerged from a valid, reliable, and ethically-conducted study, and has been analysed using a systematic and rigorous approach, it is now possible to discuss the findings from the study, which are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Since the aim of this thesis is to explore the phenomenon of educational leadership, and in particular to determine how leaders learn to lead, it has been necessary to delve into the life histories of educational leaders and to establish how these influenced their development of leadership skills and styles. Consequently, it is appropriate to present the data in chronological form, starting from the early stages of leadership development and continuing to the current post as this may provide the means to identify why and how individuals become leaders. In presenting the data, insights from other bodies of literature, namely relating to national culture, and the notion of 'figured worlds' as a means of understanding professional identity, are brought forward as potential explanations for the data obtained.

The chapter is structured as follows: Firstly, in Section 4.2, and to allow for a grounding of the data, pen portraits are produced of the twelve of participants (six each from Libya, and the UK). These are offered in order to create as holistic a picture as possible of the type of participant in the study, and hence, the 'generalised' senior leader in HE in both countries. In Section 4.3, the chapter introduces the UK data. This is divided into four sub-sections. Section 4.3.1 considers the formative years of the leaders involved, to establish how this stage helped in shaping their characters. This exploration includes general background, education, and any leadership roles held, as these overall life experiences may have been influential in determining their identity. Section 4.3.2 analyses the leaders' career paths, with a special focus on any leadership roles held, since it is during this period that individuals are likely to accumulate a range of experience and skills, and be sufficiently knowledgeable to form opinions about the usefulness of particular leadership styles. Section 4.3.3 analyses the nature and importance of the leadership role of dean. It considers what the role involves, and the specific leadership style adopted in order to operate effectively for the good of HE. And Section 4.3.4 analyses the way leaders perceive their role, their attitude towards more senior and less senior leaders, and vice versa, in order to establish similarities and differences in their perception. This helps to categorise the participants according to their self-perceptions, and highlights whether they consider themselves as

leaders/managers or academics. Section 4.4 introduces the Libyan data, and analyses this in the same sequence of sub-headings. Section 4.5 provides a brief summary of the overall analysis.

4.2 Pen Portraits

The data presented can be seen in a clearer light by fleshing out the characters of each of the study's participants, since it is acknowledged that each one is influenced in the way s/he leads, by earlier life experience. Consequently, what are referred to as 'pen portraits' are provided, with the aim of contextualising each participant, and thus enabling a richer understanding of his/her expertise and character. Before participating in the interview sessions, all individuals were given advance notification of the necessary detailed explanations of the research such as the nature, theme and areas of interest, and assured of complete confidentiality of the data they would supply. Each participant is denoted using the letters UKD (for UK dean) and LD (for Libyan dean) followed by a simple numerical sequence, i.e. UKD3 means UK dean 3 and LD3 means Libyan dean 3.

4.2.1 UK Pen Portraits

There were both male and female deans in the UK sample, so to protect their anonymity both personal pronouns (s/he, her/him) are used except in cases where the participants themselves disclose their gender.

UKD1

UKD1 comes from a working class background and lived in very primitive housing as a child. Her/his parents were not educated but nonetheless, greatly appreciated the value of education and emphasised this during his/her childhood. Consequently, UKD1 had a responsible attitude towards school, performed well there and went to university, after which s/he began a career in teaching, progressing to become a lecturer in HE. S/he said "I did some teaching as I quite fancied that, but I decided to be a lecturer in a university rather than in a college", and s/he taught the same subject studied as an undergraduate.

UKD1 has been working in the same university for 26 years. In fact this is only her/his second job since graduation. During that time, s/he has been repeatedly promoted,

enjoying the work, and being involved in consultancy activities until reaching the position of dean. The main reason for taking this post was that the previous dean had left, as outlined in the following comment:

> "I became a senior lecturer at (...). I was promoted. I was also involved in consultancy work based on the data. I got promoted again to be head of department. Then when the dean left, I was asked to do this job for a while". (UKD1)

During this journey, some critical incidents seemed to have become important in this participant's life. For instance, dealing with students and colleagues was considered critical by UKD1 in shaping her/his professional identity, as the example indicates:

> "I think the engagement with students and colleagues gives you a sense of what being professional in the university means. Students can come to you with issues and you learn professionally how to deal with those and that is again some total of learning, and helps you to know how to react to every single situation in the university environment". (UKD1)

This participant holds strong views on leadership as it "helps to make or break the faculty". S/he also indicated that this role definitely requires both management and leadership skills in order to be effective and succeed. The main reason given for this dual role was that HE is a very challenging environment.

UKD1 believes that s/he was successful in her/his leadership roles, claiming to be caring, empathetic, understanding and able to communicate very effectively, but also believing her/himself to be sufficiently pragmatic to produce solutions, ideas, and views. However, the interviewee also believes that one reason for her/his success, not only career-wise but in life generally, is the ability to know and deal with data. This was stressed as a necessary character of good leaders.

> "Data will tell you how business is doing and how people are behaving. Data can tell you anything - that is what came from my professional background. I can do anything with information much better than most and this is my key strength in life and that puts me in a very powerful position. I think the best leaders are those who know all the information and know how to use that information". UKD1

This participant considers working in HE to be a very challenging task, and that leadership positions can be very difficult ones to fulfil because academics are extremely

intelligent people who have to be completely persuaded that the leader can be trusted and should be supported. S/he also recommends building strong and cohesive teams in order to enact the faculty strategy.

At the current time, UKD1 is enjoying her/his career as a senior leader and has no intention to seek further promotion, mainly because of that enjoyment, but also because of age. However, the possibility to move sideways was mentioned by the interviewee as s/he believes her/his expertise could make a significant contribution to the lives of many people.

UKD2

UKD2 also comes from a working class background in which education was highly appreciated by her/his parents, who were the greatest influence during her/his childhood. After graduation, UKD2 started a career in a company and then took some part-time jobs, teaching being among them. This was a difficult time during which s/he struggled to manage working in two unrelated areas simultaneously. Eventually, s/he decided to make a career in teaching as this was the job that brought more satisfaction, and since entering HE as a lecturer, s/he has never left. Appointment to the current post of dean has been a logical progression up the hierarchy, although the interviewee was keen to point out that this was never planned, and hence s/he had become a manager by accident. Indeed, it was not the position of leadership/management that had been attractive but rather a deep love for the subject, and UKD2 believed that in the position of dean s/he would be able to contribute more to its development

UKD2 considered that certain critical incidents during her/his time in HE had been influential upon the development of her/his leadership abilities, one example being the reconstruction of a building which was identified as a formative moment, as it called for leadership skills in order to solve a number of associated problems. UKD2 also believes that it is important to do things for the first time, irrespective of whether the outcome is positive or negative, as this provides experiential learning which could later be built upon.

Not surprisingly, some people were cited as having significant influence upon this participant in her/his career development. These individuals were considered significant for their inspirational personalities and loyalty to their discipline, subjects and values.

Regarding the interviewee's actual duties and the balance of activities as dean, UKD2 was definite in enjoying the leadership aspect of the role more than the management one, describing her/himself as a visionary person. Nonetheless, UKD2 indicated the importance of both management and leadership skills for the job, citing the need to manage the day-to-day and immediate issues, as well as the ability to envision the future and to lead staff in the right direction to achieve that vision. In terms of leadership qualities, UKD2 expressed the strong view that leaders must be fully aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and aim to ensure that other people around them possess different skills and capabilities which they themselves do not have, and which therefore allow for effective delegation. On this issue, UKD2 said: "if you recruit people who are the same as you, the team probably won't function very well".

UKD2 gives the impression of being a team player who loves working with the academics in her/his faculty. S/he feels a responsibility and consequent duty of care towards her/his staff, and indeed believes such a feeling to be an important element of the leadership role, as such behaviour promotes trust and encourages staff to do their best at work. Moreover, UKD2 expressed her/his willingness to take responsibility for the actions of her/his staff even if they made mistakes.

It seems that UKD2 believes leadership to be not only about leading but also about supporting followers and taking risks on their behalf as a means of gaining their trust. This issue of trust was raised during the interview, when UKD2 indicated having been given a substantial amount of money to establish a new building, and perceiving this as an expression of trust being placed in her/him by top management. This demonstrates the importance of certain experiences –because UKD2 was trusted with this huge undertaking, s/he was appreciative, and made every effort to ensure that that trust was not misplaced, by doing a good job.

UKD2 indicated total happiness in the role of dean and had no ambitions to progress further up the institutional hierarchy. However, s/he did indicate that s/he might move into another role if it entailed no management responsibilities and gave her/him a free rein to pursue her/his subject. UKD2 definitely showed a preference to be more subject-focused and to enjoy some kind of freedom in the role discharged. In an associated comment, s/he also claimed that the current organisation was so large that it did not provide the opportunity for such freedom.

UKD3

This participant comes from a large family, consisting of parents and four children. Her/his parents, especially the father, were very keen for all their children to be educated and this desire had been a big influence on them. In fact this particular interviewee referred to her/his Scottish heritage as being influential in this respect, believing the Scottish culture to promote education.

UKD3 did a first degree in English but also had to take a science subject, and consequently did Computer Science, which led to a job in industry after graduation. With that experience UKD3 was able to obtain a lecturing post in HE, teaching Systems Analysis, and that began a teaching career in a discipline that had not been her/his intention, but had rather come about almost accidentally.

On joining academia, UKD3 started to develop that discipline professionally and academically, taking a Master's degree in Computer Science, a moment which was referred to as a critical one in her/his life. Subsequently, s/he studied part-time for a PhD, simultaneously accepting some leadership positions, and participating in leadership training related to the work s/he was doing. As with other interviewees, UKD3 climbed up the promotion ladder to reach the position of dean, despite never having had any plans to be in that role. Commenting on the dean's role, UKD3 said that her/his varied leadership experience consolidated her/him in the position of dean and that this necessitated a move away from Computer Science as a subject, as her/his loyalty transferred to the faculty.

What is interesting in UKD3's story is the belief in a link between her/his current role and past activities or experience during childhood and adulthood, and how the leadership positions s/he assumed during childhood had influenced her/his later leadership approach. For instance, being the oldest in the family, s/he would organise activities for her/his siblings.

Throughout her/his career, UKD3 has actively joined, presented in, and attended a number of professional bodies, believing such organisations to provide good networking and development opportunities.

UKD3 strongly believes that leadership in HE requires special talents since those being led are very able in their own right, and hence cannot simply be instructed in what to do. S/he considers that lecturers have to be persuaded of the validity of decisions, and this requires the leader to negotiate with them and gain their commitment to a move in a certain direction. To this end, UKD3 considers diplomacy as one of the main qualities demanded of senior leaders in HE.

UKD3 indicated that as s/he was approaching the end of her/his career, s/he had no intention to move further up the organisational hierarchy, but s/he did emphasise that s/he was continuing to enjoy her/his current role.

> "I am now in a position where I could choose to go fairly soon and retire. I am enjoying what I am doing. I just want to retire. I can pick up some kind of consultancy work. But I am not planning to do that".

UKD4

This interviewee is identified as female by the personal information given, and therefore referred to as she. She comes from a working class background, and her father left school at the age of 14. Education was highly valued by both UKD4's parents and they encouraged her to achieve at school, resulting in R4's academic success in the 11+ examinations, and a place at a girls' grammar school, after which she went to university to study Sociology. On graduation, UKD4 worked in business, claiming to have a business mind, but whilst in that post, she began to do some part-time lecturing which she enjoyed, and subsequently, she applied for a full-time post. Since that time UKD4 has progressed up the hierarchy, reaching the eventual post of dean.

Interestingly, UKD4 emphasised that despite having been working in an academic environment for many years, she does not consider herself to be a pure academic, and believes that her experience in industry has helped to shape her identity.

In the early stages of her career, having a child, growing a family, and a need for a graduate job all seemed big moments and these forged the change in career direction. Additionally, the job advertisements at the time determined her first post. UKD4 talked about this change in focus in the following way:

> "When I had my second child, the company I worked for was very masculine and I was the only woman in it. I thought it would be

> impossible to have two children and do that job. I either had to have a nanny or not do it. So I decided not to go back to work but started my Master's degree instead so I could get a proper graduate job … a job was advertised for a full-time marketing lecturer, and I thought … well, I could go for that".

Not surprisingly, people as well as events were cited as having significant influences upon the interviewee in her career development. UKD4 mentioned work colleagues, who had been significant in their influence and who had remained so throughout her professional career. Such significance was associated with the support and encouragement they had given to the interviewee, which in turn had boosted her confidence and enabled her to work well and progress.

This participant has a strong view on certain management issues in HE, believing that senior leaders' time is wasted by these. Furthermore, she felt that although her role should include participating in the implementation of the faculty and organisational strategy, the management of the day-to-day tasks (i.e. keeping the engine going, as she referred to this) took up a great amount of her time and shifted the balance of her role such that the desired aspects of leadership were subjugated to those of management.

Currently, UKD4 is enjoying what she is doing and expressed her willingness to advance within the university hierarchy, declaring her wish for a more challenge role.

> "I enjoy it much more here because there is a lot happening but I think I would be quite interested to move on to something else … Actually, I do not want to go to a senior level for the sake of being a senior leader, but like now I just think I could do something I am interested in and do it to the best of my ability".

The potential to make a difference, to develop other people and enhance their performance through such development, was seen as evidence of leading effectively by UKD4.

UKD5

This participant comes from a working class background and indeed a very poor family. UKD5 was encouraged by her/his parents to do well at school and did so, following this by going to Art School, graduating and starting her/his career as an art teacher. During

the early part of her/his career, UKD5 lost her/his father, and this loss served to encourage her/him to do well in life as a tribute to her/his father's support.

> "I came from a working class family with no money ... when my father died, I felt I wanted to do more in life".

UKD5 subsequently moved into HE and started to develop her/his discipline in both teaching and leadership, taking on several leadership roles before the current one. In fact, UKD5 considers leadership to be in her/his blood, believing there to be a link between her/his family history and the process of becoming a leader her/himself.

UKD5 believes that experience is her/his main source of learning claiming her/his development to have been underpinned purely by the experiences acquired during her/his own career path, and by watching talented leaders and managers. And although UKD5 has had formal leadership training, s/he claims that the training offered was general in nature, and not specific for her/his faculty. This was perceived to be a shortcoming, since s/he believed the act of leading people to differ from one sector to another, and that people themselves differ; and that consequently, the training required for leadership ought to be context-specific.

> "To be honest, most of what I have learnt was either through doing the job or by observing people who are really gifted leaders and managers like (...) and some others within the university. That has been my way of achieving management and leadership learning … the training was not specific for Art and Design since people in Art and Design are very specific and creative people. They are very different from other academics you might find in business or science or education. They tend to break the rules a lot. You have to know their mentality and psyche in order to work well with them".

UKD5 strongly believes that to teach art one must be quite young and be in contact with contemporary art. Therefore, s/he believes that after spending many years as an academic, s/he prefers to be in management. That said, UKD5 admitted that leading academics is a very difficult task as such individuals are both critical and questioning of those attempting to lead them, and have the potential to become anarchic. In this respect, UKD5 mentioned that academics tend to publicise any criticism they may have by sending open letters to the press.

Currently, UKD5 is enjoying her/his role and has no ambition to advance on the grounds that what might be asked of her/him might be beyond her/his capability, a situation s/he described as the 'Peter Principle". Additionally, the close proximity to retirement was seen as a reason for refusing promotion to higher positions.

UKD6

This interviewee comes from a working class family, in which education was genuinely valued as an activity. Her/his father left school at the age of 14 to become a bricklayer and continued in his own training, eventually becoming a Further Education lecturer, and that in itself had increased the interviewee's own perception of the value of education.

After graduation and due to her/his claim that posts in universities were difficult to obtain, UKD6 moved from one short contract to another. However, this experience was appreciated as having had a major impact on directing her/him towards her/his current post in academia, and hence it was considered a critical juncture in her/his life. Once having obtained a position in HE, UKD6 never left.

UKD6 has been a very active researcher and has actively published, a feature which s/he considers to have helped shape her/his identity as a leading researcher in the field, and a leader of research. UKD6 has also been a member of many professional bodies, having participated actively through taking on board certain roles in these organisations. It is UKD6's opinion that professional bodies serve to help develop their respective fields and to position leaders within those fields.

> "The reason for joining them is that it seemed like a developmental activity, and that by being involved, one can help define the field and contribute to its development. These things don't just get handed down fully formed. A field is developed out of the activities of its membership ... I suppose it positions you in the field. People see you as somebody who takes an interest, takes a lead, who is worth talking to about key policy matters. It makes you visible in the way that you won't be visible otherwise".

During UKD6's career journey, s/he indicated being influenced by many people some of whom s/he had never met. S/he also mentioned having been led by some bad managers, a fact which has encouraged her/him to avoid their poor people management practices. Therefore, the influences and the subsequent learning come from both sides.

UKD6 could see examples of both good and practice, and make informed decisions of how to lead accordingly.

UKD6 has a strong belief that her/his role requires the incumbent to possess both management and leadership skills. However, s/he indicated a significant volume of management activity which prevented his/her active participation in current research projects.

The interviewee mentioned that s/he is adopting a collaborative leadership style, believing strongly that organisation success is a product of the quality of work that people do. S/he considers it is not possible to force individuals to produce high quality work, and that rather it is necessary to try to recruit the best people possible, and to support and encourage them so they operate in an environment and context that nurtures their productivity.

Currently, the interviewee is enjoying what s/he is doing and not planning to apply for any leadership positions higher up the university hierarchy because of the uncertainty associated with the level of job satisfaction such a new post might bring.

4.2.2 Libyan Pen Portraits

All the Libyan deans were male and consequently in what follows male pronouns are used.

LD1

This participant was born in a small village in a big poor family. His parents were not educated but the influence for the children to be educated was clear during the interview. This encouragement by parents pushed this participant and his brothers to be educated. Indeed, this participant and his three brothers are all PhD holders.

After gaining the BA, this participant immediately pursued a Master's programme, and then a PhD. What is interesting in this participant's story is that he was appointed as a dean as soon as he had finished his PhD. In other words, he had never held any kind of leadership role. Being in this position, he had some difficulties managing things that

were not directly related to academia as he had spent most of his life in an educational environment. He says: “my mentality is purely academic and I always find it difficult to manage non-academic issues”. In fact, he clearly admitted that he was not ready for the post and he had taken it simply because he was encouraged to do so. He also struggled to manage simple things due to lack of experience.

This participant was appointed to the role of dean in a university in his home town. According to him, this made the role even more difficult because of being known within the local society. He felt he had to work hard to be as professional as possible and sometimes that meant being very strict in order to be able to lead/manage. In fact, he indirectly admits having a dictatorship style especially when it comes to decision-taking; and he claims that the nature of the followers urged him to adopt this style.

LD1 has a very strong belief that the dean’s role is very important and even more so than the university president’s role. He justifies this opinion on the grounds that deans have direct contact with students, and with academics who provide the education which the students receive.

In general, this interviewee believes that the dean’s post is not an easy one, and is full of obstacles. However, when he was asked if had any plan to progress to other leadership roles further up the hierarchy, he was not definitely against this, explaining that he would leave his future to chance. He also added that he might accept the right offer as he now considers himself to have become expert in his field.

LD2

This participant came from a very conservative and poor family. He was the only educated person in his family and education was highly appreciated by the parents. LD2 expressed the fact that he struggled financially and had not been able to finish his degree on a full-time basis, having to take up a teaching post and then some time later, continuing with his BA studies on a part-time basis.

After graduation, LD2 was appointed as a director for a secondary school. Subsequently, he was elected to be head of the Public Popular Committee in his city. It was this experience that brought him to the conclusion that it was extremely difficult to be a leader/manager in Libyan society. In fact, LD2 considered this experience to have

been critical to his development as he recognised that it had shaped his identity dramatically.

Thereafter, LD2 was offered the deanship role in a faculty within his institution, although he had never previously been employed in HE and had no idea of how that sector of education was led or managed. Describing this situation, he says: "I had no idea how to lead this institute. I had to visit some other institutions to see how things work". Consequently, he believed himself to be an accidental manager/leader.

LD2 holds the strong view that the amount of work required of deans was far more than that demanded of more senior leaders, and he mentioned that there were sometimes tasks placed upon deans that were not officially part of their job, such as for example, playing a role in students' personal lives. He thus considered himself as a parent, saying:

> "Our duties as deans, I believe, are more comprehensive than those in higher positions. Apart from our main duties, we sometimes get ourselves involved in students' personal issues … A dean should be like a father for those who work in his/her faculty and as a father and mother for students".

LD2 also believes that providing the right atmosphere for students to study and for academics to provide good education is among his priorities despite the environmental obstacles caused by the fact that Libya is characterised by continuous change in regulations, and is much affected by society's expectations. He readily acknowledges that these environmental and cultural conditions have had an impact on shaping his identity.

LD2, surprisingly, has never been offered any leadership training, and is keen to point out that he has led and managed his faculty drawing purely on his life experience. That said, he does believe that training should be provided to deans, if only to allow them to meet other people in similar roles so that they can share their experiences.

The main reason why LD2 had accepted the dean's post, and the previous leadership roles he had held, was that he considers himself patriotic and always tries to make a difference to any situation for the better. However, at this moment in time, he is reaching the end of his career and he is not intending to take on any other role whatsoever as his wish is simply to retire.

LD3

LD3 was born in a simple family where education was highly appreciated. Neither of his parents had been to school. However, LD3 himself performed quite well at school and was granted a scholarship to pursue his postgraduate studies abroad.

After gaining his PhD, LD3 was appointed as a lecturer, and head of department. He mentions that he was the only local lecturer in the department. After two years working as lecturer and head of department, he was promoted to the dean's position.

During his career, LD3 took steps to develop his subject area academically, and to enhance his own professionalism by continually remaining connected to teaching and research. He is of the strong opinion that although being in leadership is time-consuming, it remains necessary to publish, and mentioned that he has been able to produce many publications during his deanship.

LD3 considers himself to have been a responsible person since he was young. In fact, his father encouraged him to take a leadership role in the family, and he also joined two organisations where he had some leadership positions. LD3 is clear about what he has gained from these organisations in terms of constructing his leadership identity.

His view regarding leaders in HE is very definite. He believes that they must be capable academics, and should also be experienced in leadership, i.e., as a head of department, before coming into deanship. He also believes that HE organisations have lost some of their identity since they began to appoint lecturers with no academic track record, such as from different sectors in industry, and industrialists have no idea about the mechanisms within HE institutions, coming to them with very strong identities which they sometimes find difficult to change to fit with the university culture. He suggests that the traditional way of appointing academics – employing individuals as teaching assistants, and then allowing them to progress up the academic ladder – is the best.

Currently, LD3 has no intention to take any leadership roles further up the hierarchy. In fact, he explained that even his current role was a promotion that he had never intended to be in and had never applied for. Now he is reaching the end of his career but he does want to remain linked with academia, for example via research and/or part-time teaching.

LD4

LD4 also came from a poor family, where parents were the main encouragers for him to become educated to secure his future. Indeed, LD4 did well at school and was subsequently sponsored by the government to study for a BA, MA, and PHD abroad. He acknowledges this long experience of living outside Libya as one that equipped him with much knowledge and learning about other people's culture.

After finishing his studies abroad, LD4 was appointed as lecturer and head of department, and after two years, was promoted to the deanship position. This role is one that LD4 has strong views about, believing it to be difficult and time-consuming, mainly due to the bureaucratic way of management in HE, and the national centralisation. He also considers his role to be one of pure management as he is concerned only with implementing regulations, rather than with leading debate about those regulations. However, due to the difficulty of managing and getting things done in the organisation, LD4 sometimes accepts that he is more than just a manager, and has to lead.

LD4 considers himself to be an accidental manager/leader and that when he was appointed he was not ready for the post. He believes his success in the role is due to his personal wish to make a difference to the educational experience provided for students and to support his colleagues. He also believes that his approach to the job, which is completely unbiased in all aspects of it, and the fact that he ignores all other factors that might hinder the education process are the key reasons for his effectiveness. On this issue LD4 mentioned that the complexities of the role and the interference from society can make it extremely difficult to be a dean and to achieve anything.

When mentioning that he was not ready for the role, LD4 specifically referred to the lack of any kind of leadership training for any person entering a leadership role in HE. He sees this as a failing, especially in the case of individuals who are appointed to leadership positions without any experience at all of leading in any environment (HE or otherwise). As a partial solution to this problem, LD4 has joined two professional bodies over the past few years. Prior to the 2011 revolution it was almost impossible to join a professional association (or union) because they were usually non-governmental in character, and considered to be politicised and a threat to the regime. However, since 2011, such opportunities have become available, and LD4 acknowledged the amount of information gained from these organisations and from meeting people who have similar interests.

LD4 has no plans to take on any leadership role further up the hierarchy in the near future. He feels that this is something he will simply leave to chance, and if a suitable offer came he would take it as he believes his ten years as a dean has enabled him to become an expert in the field of educational leadership.

LD5

LD5 also comes from a very poor family. His parents were not educated yet encouraged their children to make the best of their educational opportunities in order to be secure in life and to obtain more respect from society.

After gaining his BA, LD5 worked in industry, and then decided to study for a Master's degree part-time. During this career journey, LD5 held a number of leadership roles and received both formal internal, and external leadership training courses specifically aimed at industrial management. He was highly appreciative of this training as he recognised that it was very valuable to him in knowing how to manage certain situations.

With several years' experience in industry, and a Master's degree, LD5 decided to look for a post in HE, and begin a career in teaching. He was able to obtain a lecturing post and was subsequently promoted to be head of department, and then a dean. During all of his career, LD5 acknowledges being influenced by some positive and negative critical incidents, as well as by particular individuals, for example, his managers, and colleagues.

LD5 holds strong views on the importance of the senior leader role in HE as it "helps to unite or disunite the faculty". He, therefore, suggested some characteristics that senior leaders should possess in order to succeed in their jobs, such as for example: being a good decision-maker, having good experience, possessing management and leadership skills, being a good listener, being a role model, being sociable, and having good connections in different sectors. He also believes in the importance of leading by example, considering the need for all leaders to be prepared to do this. His belief is that subordinates need to see leaders doing things in order to follow them, since they will not be persuaded to do that if they are simply told to do so.

Because LD5 has industrial experience, he is able to identify differences between working in industry and in HE, and one big and negative difference is the heavy bureaucracy and centralisation associated with almost every aspect of HE. He acknowledged that whilst bureaucracy and centralisation are prevalent even in industry, he had always believed that the situation would be less bureaucratic and centralised in HE as it is supposed to be a place for academic debate and development, and that would need a different approach to daily life from that in other sectors.

> "Bureaucracy is present in industrial management. However, when I came to higher education, I was shocked with the amount of delay in getting things done. To be honest, I used to have a different view regarding the management system in HE."

Currently, LD5 is happy in his leadership role but has no intentions to proceed further up the hierarchy as he is reaching the end of his career. However, he does feel that if a sideways move were to become possible, in which he could engage in different activity such as consultancy work based on his industrial background, he would be interested since he has the ability to make a big contribution in such direction.

LD6

LD6 comes from an agricultural background, his family were no more financially stable than the families of other deans, and indeed, his parents had never been to school themselves. That said, they gave the greatest encouragement to their children to become educated, and this seemed to have had a big influence on the children as they had all obtained postgraduate degrees.

After gaining his BA, LD6 began his career in industry, and then decided to study for a Master's degree, and a PhD. LD6 was proud of his industrial background, and grateful for the opportunities it gave him, especially for the chance to occupy a number of leadership roles, for which he had been given training. He had attended several leadership development courses and clearly admitted how beneficial the training was in many aspects. LD6 progressed to a post in HE as a lecturer, and was subsequently promoted to a headship and then to the post of dean. He draws the comparison between industry and HE in its attitude towards leadership development and is firmly of the opinion that special attention should be paid in HE to the provision of leadership training.

LD6 expressed the difficulty associated with leadership and management, noting how stressful it was to operate in this role, which he sees as being negatively influenced by certain factors such as the nature of the job, society, and the management system adopted; all of these he believes, have a major impact upon the role which make it more difficult to discharge. Some other factors were often linked with the political system as this seemed to have had the most negative influence upon leaders. Therefore, LD6 recommends that leaders should also possess certain qualities (as well as having formal training) in order to succeed in this role, and in this respect, he suggests leaders to be committed to work, diplomatic, patient, and hard workers. He emphasised that being committed to work is very important in order to influence the followers. In terms of influence, LD6 made it clear that the only person who has a huge influence on him is the prophet Mohamed (PBUH) and that such influence is apparent both in his professional and personal life.

Currently, LD6 as dean, occupies a strong leadership position while simultaneously teaching as required. However, he does not want to assume any further leadership roles due to the difficulty associated with these (especially in the current climate), and to the fact that he is reaching retirement.

4.3 UK Data Analysis

4.3.1 Formative Years, Education, and Leadership Roles

In gathering the data regarding the formative years, it was interesting to note that most of the participants came from working class backgrounds, had lived in social housing, and that some had struggled financially. UKD1 said in this regard, “I came from a working class family. I grew up in a council house, not a privately-owned one”, and UKD5 said “I come from a working class family that didn’t have any money”. One potential reason for the financial struggle which both these participants experienced in their childhood might be the fact that there was a strong expectation that their mothers would remain at home and relinquish any hope of being economically independent. As noted by UKD3. There was a great deal of “pressure for women to give up work” during that period of time, a reference which clearly highlights changes in societal values and that individuals respond to imperatives from the national culture (Hofstede, 1980).

It was also noticeable that most of the interviewees' parents had left school at the age of 14. Yet, although those participants came from a working class background and most of their parents had not had the benefit of full-time education beyond the age of 14, they described how their parents had valued education, and given them every encouragement to become educated in order for them to obtain good jobs and secure futures. UKD6 described this scenario, saying:

> "My parents did encourage me to be educated but they are of a completely different generation. My father left school at the age of 14 to become a bricklayer … They had no ambitions for me other than being educated". (UKD6)

However, UKD6 also said that having become a bricklayer, his father continued in his own training and eventually became a Further Education lecturer, and that in itself had increased his (UKD6's) own perception of the value of education.

> "My father was later trained to be a (…). Then he became a further education lecturer (…). That, I think, was passed on to me as a child growing up - the value of education, the importance of education". (UKD6)

It is clear from these remarks that the parents of UK deans were aware of the need to aim for upward social mobility, since with that would come better life chances. This observation is echoed in the literature by Creaby (2016) who notes that the social world inhabited by individuals becomes the mechanism by which those people can be 'something', and develop even further.

It is also interesting to note how such family values are absorbed by children when they are at an impressionable age. UKD3, for instance, referred to her/his own Scottish heritage as being influential in this respect, believing the Scottish culture to promote education. On this issue s/he said: "I think the Scottish culture really values education". And again, this reflects the views expressed by Hofstede (1980) concerning the propensity for different cultures to hold different values towards a range of issues, and to transmit those values initially through socialisation within the family.

In a similar context, one of the participants considered her/his rise to the current

position of dean as being a logical outcome of her/his family's values, and as being in the family blood. The implication was that some unconscious appreciation of leadership was in evidence through a family history of leading, which s/he had absorbed from an early age. Hence, the idea of a link between the family histories of those leaders and the process of coming into leadership is evident. Speaking on this issue, UKD5 said:

> "It is only recently I thought of that, I think my family have this kind of history. Both my grandfathers and my father were not at the worker level; they were foremen. When I think about it, I think there is some family connection in that in some small way". (UKD5)

Clearly UKD5 was raised in an environment in which her/his father and grandfathers all held leadership positions in their work environments, a situation which might suggest certain personality traits within the family that predisposed male members at least to want to organise, and to achieve tasks through marshalling the efforts of others and pushing them in the right direction. Inevitably UKD5 would observe this behaviour in the home, as her/his father's approach to the family would not be significantly different from that in the workplace. Hence, UKD5's father and grandfathers provided some very visible role models to follow. It is noticeable in the case of UKD5 that s/he said "it is only recently that I thought of that", an indication that s/he had indeed been reflecting on her/life lived (Usher 1998) and life told.

It is not surprising that parents were cited as having major and significant influences upon the interviewees in their formative years. This encouragement from parents motivated some of the interviewees to work hard at school, and to do very well. UKD1 was one example, who said: "I was always responsible in doing my school work ... and ... I worked quite hard", and UKD4 was another, who said: "I came from a very academic school, from a girls' grammar school". The point was clearly made by some of the interviewees that by working hard at junior school, they had been able to progress to very good secondary schools, and from there to university. This educational progression in itself constitutes a formative period in their career aspirations, being instrumental in "developing moral values and attributes" (Parker, 2002:10). Moreover, it functioned as a process by which leadership abilities could be determined (Ribbins, 2003) and trialled.

Indeed, when the interviewees were asked whether they had held any leadership roles

during their school period, some indicated having stepped into minor leadership positions such as being in charge of organising certain activities and sports, while others said they had occupied more important leadership responsibilities at school, and at home as well. For instance, one interviewee, being the oldest in her/his family, said s/he used to organise activities for her/his siblings, and interestingly, s/he acknowledged the impact of this early experience on her/his later leadership career.

> "I suppose I got involved a bit in leadership because you are used to doing that in the family if you are the oldest. You get more confidence in leading groups. I did a bit of leadership at school, a kind of organising some activities. I also ran a Group for three years. I was also elected to lead a youth group for a year. So, I have always had that kind of taking roles like that … Some of the skills you develop without knowing when you are child. But then you put your opportunities to apply leadership into action, and it just grows from there". (UKD3)

The above example illustrates the link between past activities or experience during childhood and adulthood, the current role held by the interviewee, and the positive influence on her/his leadership approach by the fact that s/he assumed leadership positions when young. In this connection, Ribbins (2003) notes that potential leaders are heavily influenced in their youth by parents, peers and schoolmates. Moreover, the fact that these individuals perceived themselves as occupying leadership roles suggests that they were already positioning themselves as leaders in their younger years by virtue of what was happening around them. They were 'figuring the worlds' in which they were operating (Holland et al., 1998:127), reflecting back to their socialisation units, the image being accorded to them by others on the basis of their observed abilities, as seen in the statement by UKD3 that s/he was "elected to lead a youth group for a year". Furthermore, this participant's reference to putting "your opportunities to apply leadership into action" suggests that after these early formative years, s/he actively sought to be involved in leading, thereby entering the accession phase within the overall stages of leadership as identified by Gronn (1999), and Ribbins (2003).

4.3.2 Career and Leadership Roles

Most of the senior leaders interviewed explained that they had spent the majority of their careers working in HE institutions and had had some experience of working in industry and as freelancers. This experience outside of the HE sector was highly appreciated by those who had it, as they understood it to have helped them in shaping

their identity. Speaking on this issue, UKD4 said:

> "I am quite proud of my background in industry. I can bring two different identities to create a certain new one". (UKD4)

This move from industry to academia, simple though it might initially appear, can be shown to be quite complex when considering it theoretically within the framework established for the study, since on the one hand UKD4 might be seen to have reached the Incumbency stage (Gronn, 1999; Ribbins, 2003) in one career (as an industrialist), and begun the Accession stage (Gronn, 1999: Ribbins, 2003) in a new career. Moreover, considering the change of identity, which UKD4 implicitly mentioned ("I can bring two different identities"), it is also possible to analyse the move using the 'figured worlds' paradigm which would argue that the new sets of social relations offered by a different job in a vastly different environment, provided the context for a separate identity to emerge and be shaped (Gee, 2000: Holland et al., 1998).

This kind of interpretation also has meaning in the situation where participants changed tack after graduation. Specifically, some interviewees had jobs based on their main degrees while others shifted completely. For instance, one interviewee who did a business degree went to work for a business company and was then appointed as a member of staff in a Faculty of Business. Likewise, another who had studied Art and Design and established her/his own studio as a freelance designer, was subsequently appointed to a post in the Art and Design Faculty. On the other hand, one interviewee had a Sociology degree but worked in business, claiming that despite her/his humanities discipline, s/he had a business mind. From that career move, s/he was appointed within a Faculty of Business. All such switches mark periods not only of Accession to leadership, but of Disenchantment (Gronn, 1999; Ribbins, 2003) with the previous interest/occupation.

Most of the interviewees explained that they had held part-time jobs, and some of them had had two different part-time jobs simultaneously. Teaching was among these different posts. At the end of their early career history, however, most of them had developed a passion for teaching in HE and decided to make their entire careers within the HE environment, subsequently rising through the ranks to become senior managers. These career trajectories are seen in the words of UKD2 and UKD4 which follow:

> "I worked for companies in (…) and then I worked for myself. Then I became a part-time teacher and part-time at a company. I really struggled to do two different things. At the end I realised I enjoyed teaching. Then I got a full-time job as a lecturer". (UKD2)

> "I worked half-time for a company and did some lecturing whilst finishing off my Master's. So half-post lecturing, half-post working for this business ... I really enjoyed the lecturing. Then I applied for full-time job at (…) and I was lucky - I got it". (UKD4)

For some, it was their clear intention to work in HE rather than in schools or even colleges. Interestingly, none of the interviewees had ever left the HE environment since joining, with their enjoyment of teaching within this context, emerging as the over-riding theme. UKD1 spoke of the feeling of satisfaction and his current stability within the institution, saying:

> "I did some teaching as I quite fancied that, but I decided to be a lecturer in a university rather than in a college. So I applied for a job at (…) and I was lucky to get it ... I have been in this organisation for 26 years". (UKD1)

Once joining academia, the interviewees started to develop their discipline and progress in their academic careers up to the point where they had reached their current posts. In this journey, some critical incidents seemed to have become important to their professional lives, in that they helped them to be in their present positions. In the early stages of their careers, having a child, growing a family, a need for a graduate job, job advertisements, working for short periods or on short contracts seemed big moments for some of those leaders, signalling turning points along the route to deanship.

Interestingly, the references to these particular experiences rather than others leave no doubt that for the interviewees concerned, they represented important and critical incidents, points in their lives where choices could be made about how to respond, on the basis of the meanings and significance those leaders attached to the actual experiences they recounted. In this respect, the feelings attached to the events and what has been learned from them is of significance. For instance UKD6 spoke about this experience saying:

> "I spent 12 years moving from one contract to another. That really

> gave me a good training in being resilient and very strategic in what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it. So I think that was also very formative in terms of understanding how research works and understanding how research funding works. It was very interesting sink-or-swim training". (UKD6)

What can be inferred from UKD6's recollections was that this 12-year period, whilst not a short period of time, was on reflection, a critical time in her/his life as it provided a variety of experience upon which decisions regarding her/his future could be made. The period was considered to have been extremely developmental in UKD6's self-image as a person who could be flexible, and who could become a sound researcher. For UKD6, this was a memorable era in her/his early career, and the motivation to follow a route into academic leadership. The development of UKD6's professional image can be analysed in terms of the varied experience in different social worlds ("I spent 12 years moving from one contract to another") (Creaby, 2016), which provided the foundation for her/him to construct her/his current identity (Holland et al., 1998).

Not surprisingly, people as well as events were cited as having significant influences upon the interviewees in their career development. People outside the family circle assumed this role, some interviewees citing work colleagues, who had been significant in their influence for various reasons, and who had remained so throughout their professional careers. Such types of influence can be interpreted as critical events, incidents, turning points, defining moments, and trigger events (Gronn, 1999; Parker, 2002; Luthans and Avolio, 2002), and considered as antecedents of leadership development.

However, the reasons why the participants had reached their current posts differed. Surprisingly, for whichever reason, most of them had never planned to be in their current positions, and referred to their situations as purely a matter of accident. They mentioned the fact that it was not the position of leadership/management that had attracted them but rather their love for their subject which they believed they could contribute to by being in the Dean's role. As indicated earlier, Parker (2002) refers to the development of moral values and attitudes in life history, and it has been shown that all the UK deans came from families that instilled such values, which are seen in their desires to improve their subject areas for the intrinsic value this would bring. Participants also referred to the fact that other applicants for their posts were insufficiently qualified, and this made them the logical choices, another example of a

wish to do the ‘right thing’ for the development of their faculties. UKD2 talked about this ‘accidental’ route to the deanship, saying:

> “I gradually went from associate lecturer to a full-time lecturer, to senior lecturer, to principal lecturer, to head of department, and at no point in that journey, honestly, did I think that I would like to be the dean. I have been an accidental manager ... The job I am in now, I did not apply for it. I was in the interview panel, interviewing people for this job. I thought I should have gone for this job. The people who applied were not very good so I did not appoint. Instead I said I would do the job myself for a while so I did it temporarily and then applied for it on a permanent basis afterwards. So, I have always been a bit reluctant to say I want to do that ... For me, my subject has been my passion. So, I would find it quite hard to move and be a dean or a manager of something I didn’t enjoy as a subject. To be honest, it was not leadership that attracted me to it; it was the subject”. (UKD2)

What is interesting in the above quotation is that this senior leader clearly shows that s/he found her/himself unexpectedly in a position of leadership to which s/he had not originally aspired, and had not envisaged despite progressing solidly up the lecturing hierarchy to the point at which line management is included. Indeed, the role of dean seemed not to be one that UKD2 relished as there are clear indications in this quote that her/his interests lay in developing her/his subject area and not in managing an enterprise as such. And it would appear that only the love of her/his discipline prompted the acceptance of the dean’s role, in an attempt to ensure that no person who could not protect this was appointed to the position.

Similarly, there were others who had aspired to their posts in the same way. In other words, several senior leaders were ‘accidental’ managers/leaders. One might wonder, given such information, on what bases those leaders had been chosen and why they had accepted their posts, although with UKD2 it was obvious from the answer that s/he was not prepared to be led/managed by someone of lesser ability.

A closer look at the above quotations, and to the educational and leadership experiences of the leaders in question, suggests that most of them had received a good education, had amassed great experience, become experts in their disciplines, and above all had done an excellent job for their organisations. Hence, they were offered managerial positions. The following quotation shows how well one of those participants had progressed in his career.

> "I was in charge of a Master's programme and I seemed to do quite well at that. We grew the programme and there was a lot of people coming to do it. The colleague who used to lead this had some problems and things started to fall apart. I was asked to rescue the programme and ended up doing the entire work. And then I was put in charge of bidding for money and leading some European projects". (UKD3)

What is also interesting in UKD2's quotation is the loyalty shown by some of those leaders to their subjects, since despite having been appointed to leadership posts, they still considered their priority to be to their subjects. Implicit in this consideration is the recognition that assuming the dean's role naturally involves the assumption of new managerial and administrative responsibilities that inevitably compete for time with those aspects of the job for which incumbents have been prepared (i.e. teaching and research), and which they prefer. Hence, a tension is seen to exist in the desire to retain the preferred dimensions of the role whilst simultaneously discharging those of leadership. Such tension can be interpreted as signalling the start of the Divestiture phase in leadership identified by Gronn (1999), or the Disenchantment phase detailed by Day and Bakioglu (1996), and Ribbins (2003). According to Ribbins (2003), this is the point at which an incumbent can become enchanted or disenchanted, and in the case of the latter orientation, efforts may be made to abdicate the leadership role.

However, one participant had a different view regarding subject loyalty, claiming that the nature of the job required some sacrifice of the subject. This can be illustrated in the following example by UKD4.

> "My discipline is information systems - that is what I taught. Now, I have moved away from being in a subject department and I suppose my loyalty is more to the faculty. I have detached myself a bit from the discipline because my job requires me to do that". (UKD4)

This interviewee extended his response to open up a further area for related discussion, that being the reason for departing from the academic subject. This was an interesting issue since all participants had begun their jobs in HE as academics, and all enjoyed teaching. Based on the data, the large amount of managerial responsibility was perceived as an obstacle preventing some senior leaders from becoming involved in genuine research, as noted by UKD6.

> "What I do a lot less of now is actual research. That is the thing that has been squeezed from my time. The time has been really squeezed. Mainly I am focusing on management, on supporting others to develop their projects and making sure that there are plenty of ongoing projects in the Research Institute". (UKD6)

The above example clearly shows that the administrative workloads for senior leaders are hindering their ability to operate specifically in their subjects as they have insufficient time for research. UKD6's reference to research being "squeezed" from his time demonstrates a negative feeling in this respect, and echoes the comments of other deans. They see themselves as being involved in the move to 'new managerialism'; i.e. becoming managers of people and resources and being effective in this task through the setting of performance assessment standards and targets, which is counter to their original training as teachers.

Regarding accepting the post of leadership, or what made them believe they could successfully hold such a leadership position, the desire to make a "significant contribution" and a "significant difference" to their subjects were recurring themes for some of those leaders, again reflecting their moral values acquired during their life histories (Parker, 2002; Briggs 2007). This could be the result of their belief that being in leadership would be empowering, allowing them to make a difference and have more control over their work. In addition, they had become experts in their fields and felt they could be valuable in other contexts. UKD1 considered these possibilities, saying:

> "It is a strong leadership position ... there are areas of specialism within the university where you can make a very significant contribution because you have become an expert in those areas ... so, there are opportunities sometimes to move sideways into roles where you can make a very, very significant difference to a lot of people's lives and also to a lot of university priorities". (UKD1)

Such observations fit neatly into the stage of Autonomy (Day and Bakioglu, 1996) as it is clear that deans see themselves as having the power and academic freedom to steer their faculties in a direction which they choose, and which is for the best.

Other senior leaders, however, accepted this management/leadership offer as an honourable way to end their careers after spending many years as academics, claiming

that the challenge of certain jobs might be beyond their capabilities - a situation described by one interviewee as the 'Peter Principle'. UKD5, for instance said:

> "Somebody of my age, I think, is too old to teach very well. I prefer to be in management. I work with a great bunch of people. I can determine what I do day-by-day. I don't have to work 9 to 5. In fact, although I am actually point five, I am only paid half of the week, I come in more than that because I really enjoy it and I work a lot". (UKD5)

Having discussed the life history of the senior leaders involved, and how they had reached their current role, it is worth mentioning that despite their claims to be 'accidental' leaders, and having no original intention to become deans, there is no evidence to suggest that any of them did not actually want their deanships. In fact, in the UK, deans apply for their posts in open competition – there is no forced promotion; and this implies that they were all psychologically in tune with the idea of becoming an academic leader at that level, that they all had faith in their leadership abilities, that they would be able to carry staff with them, that they were all proactive, and that their tenure would allow them to achieve something that coincided with their values. This suggests that their life histories had been instrumental in allowing them to 'figure their worlds' (Holland et al., 1998; Urrieta, 2007) and that, as argued by Floyd (2012:282), they would actively seek leadership positions in education because they would perceive these as empowering, and help them "to exert more control over their professional and organizational socialization, which, in turn, would allow more harmony with their professional and personal identities". It is important to grasp this point as it is one to which the chapter will return after discussing the data from the Libyan deans.

From the discussion of life histories, it is now appropriate to discuss the nature and importance of these participants' current roles, and how they go about the process of leading their faculties in order to highlight any influence from their life histories on what they do now and the way they lead.

4.3.3 The Nature and Importance of the Role

From the data collected, it is clear that senior leaders in HE are charged with a range of roles and responsibilities which are characterised by their challenging and multi-faceted nature. Given this situation, it is difficult to identify the precise expectations of senior leaders, placed as they are, in the middle of the organisational hierarchy and looking

upwards to senior management and downwards to educational delivery. The role was described by most participants as a 'significant responsibility', there being general agreement that the most obvious part of the job was to function as a bridge between the strategic direction of the university as a whole, and the subject they lead, and simultaneously to act as team co-ordinators and team builders in their faculties. The comments by UKD2 reflected this position, as follows:

> "My job is to make some kind of interpretation of a decision that is taken, of which I am part, and the strategic direction of the university, and to try to enable staff in my subject area to see what that means for us, how that might affect us, and how we find our own direction inside that. The next part I guess, is about pulling the staff together as a team and getting them to own that direction and own their identity as a group … what you need to do is to make sure you build the team around you that complements you and that can deal with the range of things" (UKD2).

The above quotation shows two important roles for senior leaders. The first is the role of interpreter in respect of decisions. This requires those leaders to be fully aware of the university mission and vision, as is illustrated in the following quotation: "it is about understanding what the university is about and where to go" (UKD1). Understanding the university mission and vision prompts leaders to develop strategies that meet the university targets, as indicated by UKD1 who said: "we interpret our own strategy to fit in with the university key performance indicators strategic imperatives". Clearly, it is important in this role to be capable of implementing the university strategy, and that in itself requires an ability to envision what will happen in the future, and to fully appreciate the overall organisational vision as agreed by senior management. Such appreciation might well be gained by the deans' involvement in determining together with senior management, the direction to be followed by the university, but whether this type of participation is offered or not, for deans to be able to think strategically about the advancement of their faculties, they must be aware of educational developments at the national and international level. Only with this awareness is it possible for them to develop their own vision and to set it within the overall university mission. In fact, the word 'vision' appeared repeatedly in the data, suggesting the need for a rather special quality, and specifically in this context, three respondents considered the possession of vision, which they acknowledged as a leadership activity, as a characteristic that differentiated them from others. In this regard, UKD2 said:

> "The difference is that you have to be the person who sets the agenda and has the long-term vision … leaders need to know where they are going as an academic unit ... they ask themselves - what do we stand for, what are we about, what are our values, what do we care about, etc., so what you have to try to establish with them is the nature of the core values, and when they make independent decisions, they make them around those values". (UKD2)

This whole emphasis on the concept of 'vision' can be seen in the context of leaders continually re-configuring their worlds – 'finding their place', 'determining who they are' and doing this within "the collective space of cultural forms and social relations" (Holland et al., 1998:5) that is the faculty. The quote by UKD2 shows that it is the leader's job to create a vivid picture of the university targets which have to be achieved, and to develop a precise strategic plan to meet those targets. Therefore, not only is the ability to envision important, but so too is the knowledge of how to enact that vision. In other words, leaders must be able to turn their vision into reality and this entails being committed to it and being able to convince others to show the same commitment. This convincing of others, is part and parcel of the senior leader's identity which in itself is the outcome of a range of self-understandings, noted by Holland et al. (1998) as arising from the individual not only telling people who s/he is, but telling her/himself who s/he is, and acting in a way that confirms that.

In this regard, UKD1 emphasised the need for everything to be based on good evidence and on shared ideas. S/he said: "we are going to do something that I think will work. It is based on the evidence that we have got and what I have listened to from everyone", keeping in mind that this is a workplace and nothing should be considered personal; "it is not a personal thing if I disagree with somebody. This is work". (UKD2). And above all, it is among the definitions of leadership to get people do things they never thought of and sometimes never wanted to do.

Implicit in UKD2's comments is the belief that values underlie the decisions made about strategy implementation, and that ultimately it is her/his values, and those of the organisation that take priority, as indicated by reference to potential disagreements between her/himself and staff. Undoubtedly, the issue of what underpins implementation strategies was seen as an important one, since the word 'values' was mentioned three times, signifying the need to be aligned with the fundamental beliefs, aims and objectives of the institution. And this requires that individuals of like mind be

placed in positions where adherence to the university's values and mission is demanded. Consequently, the question can arise as to how to solve the problem of difference between a dean's values and those of the institution, and in this situation three options are available. The first is for the dean to go out on a limb and lead according to her/his personal beliefs, although for how long that might be tolerated is another issue. In such a situation, the leader might be enthusiastic and motivated and produce good outcomes, or produce bad outcomes leading to low performance, and thus face the possibility of being sacked.

The second option is for leaders to put their own values to one side and adopt those of the organisation once in work, whilst simultaneously trying to refrain from participating in any activities that clash with their own value system and that cause them to experience guilt or discomfort. Such a strategy may allow these leaders to gain credibility among more senior leaders; indeed, this option seems to be the optimum one for UKD2 based on the comments already highlighted, and for some other interviewees. Nonetheless, the question can be asked as to how can such leaders 'own' their decisions since there might be a disjunction between their personal values and their actual behaviour, and this might well impact upon their self-image, causing internal difficulties about their identity.

And the third option is to try to influence the organisation's values with a view to creating some change in them. UKD3 raised the potential for this saying: "the university strategy is not a top down strategy, we can influence it" UKD3. Nevertheless, from the data it is apparent that the organisation is the more powerful influencer in this respect.

Following the analysis of UKD2's quotation above, and within the context of turning vision into reality, achieving that reality is only possible through the use and involvement of teams of individuals, and this leads to the second role occupied by leaders, which can be considered one of management, that of team-builder, as indicated by UKD2. In this respect, there was agreement among all participants about the importance of pulling teams together, and getting the right teams around them. This implies ensuring that team members possess different skills and capabilities which they themselves (senior leaders) do not have. The following comments highlight this:

"There are certain issues that I, personally, am not good at and I work

> with people who are very good in that and I delegate that to them". (UKD5)
>
> "If you recruit people who are the same as you, the team probably won't function very well". (UKD2)

Within the context of working with people and putting them together to form effective teams, most of the interviewees mentioned that people management was a key aspect of the leader's role, and that misleading people or failing to manage them properly might well lead to the organisational strategy not being implemented. UKD1 summed this up, saying:

> "People management is a very important aspect. You can set as many strategies as you want and try to put them in place, but if you cannot manage the people, lead the people, then it is very difficult to get those things done". (UKD1)

This aspect of people management was also considered difficult for various reasons. One of the respondents mentioned the fact that although some of her/his academic followers are more qualified than s/he is; they still need someone to clarify things to them and guide them. UKD5 alluded to this problem, saying:

> "Some of the academics are more highly qualified than I am. It is just that they need somebody who could interpret the outside world to them and sell it back to them. To explain what is possible and what is not possible". (UKD5)

The above participant claimed that those academics are unable to interpret what is around them and are highly dependent on their managers/leaders for such an interpretation of reality. That said, not all participants felt the same as UKD5, and there were indeed others who really appreciated the role played by academics in helping them to discharge their management duties, especially in the realms of decision-making, even though these academics may not actually be able to see the bigger picture. In this respect, UKD1 stressed the role of the academic leader as one who could take contributions from academics and then come to a final decision. On this matter, UKD1 said:

> "I would say that academics are fully able to make decisions. They probably sometimes cannot see where everything all fits together but that is the job of the leader - the role of a strong leader is, in a sense, one of bringing all that together". (UKD1)

What could be inferred from both the above quotations (UKD5 and UKD1) is the claim that academics are not capable of seeing the whole picture around them. This, however, may not be considered a weakness in their characters as they cannot be expected to have the required details to see the same picture as managers/leaders given the differential in their job positions and responsibilities, and their distance or closeness to the issue concerned. In this regard UKD2 and UKD1 commented:

> "Things would look easy from a distance; but when you come close to the problem, you see the complexity of it; it stops being straightforward and I think the same is true of the role". (UKD2)

> "Deans are fully aware of just about everything that is going on in the faculty and should be". (UKD1)

What was apparent in respect of this second role (team building) was the expectation that leaders must convince team members to own their identity as a group. However, since those senior leaders deal directly with academics, in some cases it might be difficult to make that happen because as pointed out by an interviewee, academics are critical and questioning of those attempting to lead them, and have the potential to become anarchic. In fact, it was noted that academics also tend to openly criticise educational managements in open letters to the press. UKD5 raised these points, saying:

> "Academics are very bad at regulating themselves, organising themselves … If you put 100 academics in a room and leave them together, you get anarchy … I think most academics are temperamentally critical. They are trained to be critical in their PhDs and they tend to be critical of the system surrounding them ... if you read the trade literature such as the Times Higher Education Supplement, you see a lot of letters and articles from academics, lecturers, senior lecturers, and professors talking about academic managers and they are nearly always negative. It is as if they believe educational managers are just people who are there to stop them getting on, they are overpaid, they are too bureaucratic, etc." (UKD5)

The description of the situation as potentially anarchic, was interesting, since UKD5 was her/himself an academic prior to assuming her/his leadership role, and would have personal experience of how academics relate to authority since all participants have been academics. In the position of an academic, UKD5 was employed to deliver education, to teach and to support that teaching with research, and in doing that job s/he

expected a level of freedom to enable her/him to reach a position of excellence in that respect. Hence, s/he was aware of attempts to curb that freedom by pressures from authority figures requiring attention to other matters than teaching and research. Obviously, the removal from the lecturing staff to the position of academic leader could present a genuine crisis of conscience because essentially this takes a person out of her/his natural habitat and presents the challenge of having to manage the unmanageable, to re-configure the social situation in which they are operating and possibly to re-orient preferences as the negotiation of what is possible in the new 'world' results in something different from the previous one. In such a situation, people generally revert to their own core beliefs and try to manage in the best way they can, making their judgements and expressing opinions on the basis of their personal and professional values, which it is likely others may share. The key issue would be not to forget how to empathise with subordinates, whilst exploring how best to achieve the objectives of the job of dean.

In all of this task of people management, the senior leader may fall back on the conceptual framework relating to national culture, proposed by Hofstede (1980), since whilst UK deans theoretically operate in universities that are themselves the products of national culture, and there is the expectation that there would be no clash of values between those at differing levels of the university hierarchy, UK scores on power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism for example all suggest that individuals are more prepared to challenge authority, less prepared to adhere to strictly regulated systems, and prefer personal autonomy to shared responsibility through teamwork, than are individuals in other countries and world regions (as for instance, in Libya). Consequently, for UK senior leaders, consideration of these tendencies is important.

Also in considering the senior leader's role, the issue of financial management was raised, being considered as crucial by four of the participants. In their opinion, the misinterpretation of financial information was too great a risk to ignore, and consequently, the need for some fundamental ability in reading and interpreting financial matter was deemed absolutely essential. In this regard, UKD2 commented:

> "Being able to deal with finance is quite important. I have learnt in this job that you don't really need to do it but you need to know how

> to read it … in the end, one of your biggest responsibilities is to ensure that all those people around you keep their jobs. And if you mess up the finance, then everything will be at risk, and that is not fair." (UKD2)

This issue was developed by UKD6 who spoke of financial insecurity as a very important challenge facing senior leaders in HE. On this matter, he said:

> "Universities are having to bid more and more for funding. This is becoming very competitive, and the funding is very difficult to secure". (UKD6)

Clearly, without funding to underpin the academic enterprise, no such activity can effectively take place, and this was seen as a problem, since academic leaders are charged precisely with ensuring that intellectual endeavours are pursued. UKD6 described the university as "a place of research, a place of intellectual activity", and emphasised that leaders must always be mindful of what they were there for. UKD4 echoed these sentiments, saying:

> "We have always to remember what we are here for. Looking after our students and making sure that our students are happy and achieving. Also, making sure that the staff are growing in their knowledge as well and that might be to do with research." (UKD4)

From the data obtained and from the above explanation, the senior leaders' role can be described as one which has three dimensions, these being: operational, financial, and academic. Based on the codes extracted from the data, the operational role is seen to be connected to strategic direction and leading/managing people; the financial role is concerned with the ability to deal with finance and secure funds for the organisation; and the academic role is concerned with knowledge exchange, teaching, and research. This would lead us to a further issue which is the mix of leadership and management activities in which those senior leaders are involved.

In fact, all the senior leaders interviewed expressed similar sentiments, indicating that their roles definitely required both management and leadership skills, and that both are considered vital, and are used in complementary ways. One interviewee provided an example showing how her/his position requires her/him to demonstrate both management and leadership skills.

> "The UK Research Councils have been very squeezed of money recently and universities are bidding more and more for Research Council funding. So it is becoming very, very competitive, and very difficult to secure such monies. Now, that is a management issue - trying to support people to secure funding. This brings with it the need for some strategic thinking, some leadership. The strategic element comes in thinking, OK, let us try somewhere else. Let us build up networks in Europe. Let us try and make sure that we are successful in getting large European projects that will compensate for the lack of funding from somewhere else. So I am constantly looking at the horizon, planning at the strategic level, and predicting what problems are coming down the line, and what opportunities might be arising that we can make the most of". (UKD6)

The above quotation shows clearly that the role requires the ability to manage the day-to-day and immediate issues, and to lead into the future on the basis of the senior leader's vision. It stresses the need (through the phrase "constantly looking at the horizon") to try to predict what a new world will look like, and (through the phrase "that we can make the most of"), to prepare to operate in a newly-configured one.

If we take for instance, the importance of pulling teams together (as mentioned above) and the vision aspect (as also mentioned above), it is possible to see how these two activities are connected. In other words, four respondents considered team building as crucial to achieve the vision and turn it into reality. For instance, UKD1 said: "build strong teams, then you can enact the strategy", and UKD2 considers it part of his/her job to build teams in order to achieve goals, as indicated by the comment "my job is partly about checking and putting the right team around me to be able to achieve the goals".

Whilst team building is clearly a critical aspect of the dean's role, the actual act of putting together a successful team for any specific project may not be an easy thing to do, especially given the earlier discussion relating to the individuality of academics, and their free thinking, which might preclude them from sharing the vision of a team, and indeed predispose them to challenging new initiatives (Hofstede, 1980). Hence, the leader's job can be extremely difficult in such circumstances, requiring her/him to determine which individuals are right to discharge any particular role within a team, and then giving that team sufficient leadership for it to become a cohesive unit. In this

respect, deans saw themselves as requiring good communication skills, including being able to steer team discussion into fruitful directions. On this issue, UKD1 said:

> "It is also important to build, lead and manage strong cohesive teams ... but if you have members who listen but never do anything, you have really big problems and this means there is never a solution. So you have to work towards the direction". (UKD1)

Given these differing requirements of individuals assuming this role, HE organisations can be said to be in need of knowledgeable, strong and powerful leaders/managers who are multi-talented and who can master most challenges. In this respect, UKD1 said:

> "Now I am involved in fashioning all of those developments which are … when you think about it: marketing, staff development, research issues, and everything else that goes with undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and the output of students - whether we have enough students, whether the programmes are valuable - all of these things are what I ultimately manage and I have to know in detail what is going on in each of these areas because when my senior managers come in here to talk to me about those things, they have to believe that I understand those challenges and I can, therefore, offer advice, take advice, and ensure that the faculty moves forward. So it is an important position. The dean's role helps to make or break a faculty. If you don't have a strong dean in place - and the dean must have different characteristics, personal characteristics - if you don't have a strong knowledgeable dean in place, I think the whole faculty is in danger of diverging from the central mission because that is what brings it all together … a wrong decision by a dean can create a shortfall in student numbers and could create dissatisfaction in the student experience." (UKD1)

The above quotation illustrates how difficult the senior leader's role is, and how much risk and ethical responsibility are embodied within it, thereby raising the question of what qualities such leaders should possess in order to lead/manage effectively. When reflecting upon the characteristics and skills they considered as essential for their effectiveness as senior leaders in HE, the participants cited as the most common and important: having a clear vision and the ability to plan strategically, being resilient, trustworthy, flexible, a team-worker, having patience, the ability to delegate, good communication skills, the ability to listen to people, good decision-making skills, self-awareness, collegiality, and diplomacy.

Taking a closer look at the above characteristics and skills, it becomes noticeable that

most characteristics and skills are very personal, and indeed are the kind that individuals are not born with. Many of these are clearly developed during their formative years through socialisation within the family, at school, at university (Janson, 2009; Shamir and Eilam, 2005). But as one individual's formative experiences can differ from another's, the situation remains whereby not every candidate for leadership will possess the required skills, and the question here is that if these characteristics and skills are essential for HE leaders, what can the organisation or those responsible for recruiting to these posts do to ensure that appointees possess them. Of this study's participants, five had been working in the organisation for many years, and had been appointed to their current posts internally. For instance, UKD1 said: "I have been in this organisation for 26 years". This might be a case where the desired personal characteristics could readily be seen, and have been tested over time, prior to appointment.

Whilst there are obviously some common ideas about the qualities required of good leadership, it was acknowledged by the interviewees that leadership practices could be implemented differently, as indicated in the following quotation:

> "I think there is a shared trajectory, a certain amount of shared assumptions about what leadership in the institution should involve. But I am sure we carry out things differently". (UKD6)

So, there is room for interpretation in the way followers are managed. Indeed, the choice of leadership style was seen to be influenced by a range of factors such as: type of organisation, type of people, challenges, problems, and external factors. It was also apparent that leadership is dependent upon situational and organisational facets and that an effective leader will adopt different leadership styles according to the precise situations. UKD3 summed up this scenario, saying:

> "At the moment, it is probably quite loose because we are trying to get a shape around what we do with companies and reacting to things. I was probably more directional when I was setting up the Master's; but there was still a lot of listening to people and trying to take on board their views, and steer a way through the middle ... In my current role, you cannot be too directional. There is a lot of negotiation that needs to be done to make things happen … It is not a question of the type of style that I have always used but of what seems to be what is working at any one time". (UKD3)

This quote reflects a level of professional development within UKD3, as s/he identifies a leadership strategy used in one setting (that of curriculum developer "setting up the

Master's") and a more progressive one "in my current role", where direction has to take a step backwards to allow for more negotiation. It also showcases that the dean concerned has adopted a new professional identity with the progression from academic to academic leader.

Surprisingly, although the leadership styles and competences indicated by the interviewees describe a situation in their faculties in which there is a free and democratic atmosphere, some of them did mention having a fixed mental plan of what outcomes they want to achieve before they share issues or problems with colleagues. UKD6, for instance, expressed this, saying:

> "I like talking to people, to encourage them, persuade them, and bring them along with me ... but I do have a clear view of what I want to happen. So it is not just about sharing the decision-making process in a democratic meeting of staff and seeing what the outcome might be - I do have things in my mind that I definitely want to happen". (UKD6)

This comment does, of course, beg the question of whether there is any point in sharing and discussing an issue on which a decision has already been taken. It shows a contradiction between the claim that this leader operates democratically, and the claim that the decisions are already made before the so-called democratic process is conducted.

Clearly, those leaders have found different styles to be effective and successful based on whichever reason. Now that the above discussion has explored the formative years of the selected participants and what they currently do in their leadership role, it is worth mentioning the attitude of those leaders towards what they do and how they perceive their identities.

4.3.4 Perception of the Senior Leader's Role: Leaders, Managers or Academics?

Regarding the perception of the importance of the senior leader's role, and that of people at other levels in the university, the over-riding theme was that senior leaders are extremely important for the organisation and that they are highly respected in their faculties. Interestingly, three leaders indicated that they found it fascinating to work in HE as they are considered the backbone of the organisation and worth listening to by people in their faculties, yet at the same time more senior leaders displayed a different

attitude towards them. Clearly, different people have different perceptions of others' leadership styles, roles, and importance as the following comment demonstrates:

> "The interesting thing I found is that the dean is seen as very important for the life of the faculty by just about everyone in the faculty. The dean's role carries a lot of respect from the faculty. One of the things I found when I stepped up into this senior leader role and started working with the higher executive (the university executive) is that I didn't get a sense of anything more than these are the bosses and that is what they expect of you. I certainly did not feel an overwhelming respect towards the deans coming from our bosses ... It is interesting working in the environment here where you are regarded as the main man, as a representative of the faculty in another environment. It is absolutely fascinating. So, you see from the people who are just within the faculty there is a different attitude. You go away from your faculty and you are immediately stripped of your authority, you are questioned by others - why have you done this or that, what is going on here, why don't you know that". (UKD1)

The above situation can be analysed using both cultural theory as proposed by Hofstede (1980), and the 'figured worlds' theory suggested by Holland et al. (1998), but first we can consider how to provide initial answers to the very important questions raised by the quote. For instance, why is it that those leaders are perceived with importance by their faculty members, yet not accorded that same value by more senior leaders? The data clearly shows that the interviewees noticed a change in attitude from those who were previously colleagues once they had become deans, and assumed a new professional identity. UKD1, for example, said "people have known me for a long time but I suddenly found myself a dean, and I noticed people's attitude towards me changed". Likewise, UKD4 said: "I always ask why they (staff members) don't call me rather than sending an email. Well, they say they don't want to disturb me because they think I am important now". It is readily apparent from these two comments by UKD1 and UKD4 that their elevation to authority was seen as removing them from what they used to do (i.e. the same job as their colleagues), and that the assumption of dean changed their identity in their previous colleagues' perception. It was also clear that the power accompanying the role of dean was recognised by those colleagues and an additional layer of respect emerged, which essentially resulted in greater distance between them. Faculty staff (heads of department, principal lecturers etc.) appear to respect their deans because they are the people they approach to plead for resources and permission to launch new courses etc. Hence, deans are perceived as being in positions

of power, and can help staff realise their personal ambitions by properly funding initiatives.

Undoubtedly, the behaviour of UKD4's subordinates (former colleagues) is a reflection of their acceptance of the social inequality generated by the elevation of UKD4 to the more powerful role of dean. In this respect (Hofstede, 2001:79) argues that such social "inequality is usually formalized in boss-subordinate relationships", which incorporate a degree of distance that marks the respect individuals have for legitimate authority. Moreover, the belief among UKD4's previous colleagues that s/he had become "more important" also reveals a new positioning within the 'figured world', which serves as the context for the new professional identity as academic leader to emerge and be shaped (Gee, 2000). In the acquisition of the new identity, the old identity evaporates.

This is shown in the two quotations from UKD4 and UKD1 already referred to, which confirm the hierarchical nature of HE and the fact that people's attitudes change towards colleagues who have been promoted, simply because the promoted person has lost her/his group identity, and assumed another. Such a phenomenon is seen in all organisations, but can be observed directly in HE in top management's perception of the role of dean. Generally, in such an environment, top managers have themselves fulfilled the role of dean earlier in their own academic careers, and see their promotion to the higher echelons of the institution as confirmation of the fact that what they did as deans is not as important as what they do now. For instance UKD2 says: "most deputy vice chancellors have been deans previously, so they have some understanding". In fact, as deans are lower down the organisational hierarchy this is logical. There is no other reason that can explain this, although whilst it is entirely to be expected, it does not appear to have been acknowledged by those leaders, since most participants claimed not to be hierarchical. For instance UKD4 says: "I don't think that I have that approach (being hierarchical) towards people and I would like not to have that approach", and UKD1 says: "you see yourself as an ordinary person who happens to take some additional responsibilities". It seems those leaders want to convey to the researcher their non-hierarchical approach, and want to portray a good image when it comes to their attitudes, and that may result from the low ranking accorded generally to the concept of power distance within the UK (Hofstede, 1980). That said, from what has been indicated so far about deans having the final say in decision-making despite the involvement of faculty members, it is clear that deans cannot always act totally

democratically, and that faculty staff appreciate that, which is why they begin to distance themselves from deans as they are appointed. Perhaps it is that deans themselves perceive they have not changed in their approach to their old colleagues, whereas the perception of those colleagues is something different.

Nonetheless, deans do seem to appreciate their subordinates, which is a tendency that appears not to extend to more senior leaders, whose cavalier attitude towards deans apparently gives the impression that this level of the hierarchy is not properly respected. In this connection, UKD3 said: "I think the perception at the top is not correct - they have no real appreciation of who and what we are". Perhaps it is the case that more attention and appreciation naturally come from people with whom one has known and worked; and that as one climbs up the promotional ladder the stakes are higher and the work relationship must be more professional with no attention to feeling. In addition, top management (vice chancellor and members of the chancellorate) see themselves as strategists - great thinkers - because they consider their university among other universities, they see deans as being involved with strategy but only to the extent that they provide statistics and developments which can be reported to HEFCE or research bodies - the rest of their time they are involved in ensuring delivery - i.e. operational matters. Therefore, in this scenario, these feelings of being under-appreciated by more senior leaders could be regarded as unfounded and exaggerated.

However, one of the participants did express the opinion that this overwhelming perception by deans might well soon diminish as the university is currently going through some very senior changes. In this respect, it was commented:

> "That could change soon because we have got a lot of change going on ... the new vice chancellor, the new director of services. So a lot of very senior posts are changing. So that might change". (UKD3)

In contrast, two of the participants had different views regarding how they are seen and treated by more senior leaders. They believed that some of those people who had been in this position themselves, did know how important deans are. In this respect, UKD2 said "obviously, the more likely ones to understand my role are those people who have been in similar roles". In addition, UKD5 felt that all the senior leader positions were important and complemented each other, a sentiment expressed when he said: "I would

say that the more senior leaders do know how important my job is, as they realise that they cannot do everything themselves".

However, since those deans are professionals now, what is also important is their perception of themselves and their professional identities as this is a core of this study. In that connection the literature is clear that the self-image is determined directly by one's environment, and implicitly culture, and that the majority of what is known about the self is derived from others (Stets and Burke, 2003; Mead and Morris, 1934). On the issue of how the senior managers did in fact perceive their professional identity – whether as leader/managers or academics – and also the question of what had helped in shaping that identity, the deans had much to say, with the consensus emerging among most of the participants that their professional identity had developed over time. This development was described as an ongoing process of the interpretation of experiences in their personal and professional contexts. Hence, their professional, academic and personal values were seen to be what defines them as senior leaders, as explained by UKD1:

> "Being professional to me is about having a sense of who you are with respect to your academic qualifications, who you interact with, and the personal skills that you bring to a situation. So, this embodies a sense of qualifications, what bodies you belong to, what interaction you have with stakeholders, your own personal ethics and behaviour. You put these things together and get a professional" (UKD1).

Based on the data and on the above discussion specifically, those leaders' identities seem to have been developed through a mixture of historical biography and professional experience; a circumstance that urges them to have multiple, and flexible identities which, of course, can be good as it gives them meaning and guidance to their behaviour. In this context, UKD6 said:

> "I think of myself as a researcher, that would be my professional identity and I think of myself as a research leader ... You sometimes talk to people in other institutions and expectations of the role of the associate dean of research ... you know this would be very sharp-suited, usually middle-aged, usually quiet, and very much the provost, the dean, the senior administrator. So when people find out that I am an associate dean and an active researcher, they find that quite difficult to understand. Identity certainly comes from continuing to publish and continuing to be thought of as a leading researcher as well as a leader of research" (UKD6).

The above quotation shows some very important ideas. Firstly, the leader has multiple role identities as can be seen in the images of self which UKD6 provided (researcher and research leader). In other words, this respondent perceived her/himself as a leader and an academic. It seems there is a kind of interweaving among these two identities and this could be considered a positive thing as it may well encourage more harmony between them. The second idea is that the way people see themselves can change according to the people surrounding them, and the location in which they find themselves at any one time (Mead and Morris, 1934; Creaby, 2016; Gee, 2000; Holland et al., 1998). In the above quotation, the leader seemed to possess a sense of self-awareness and of how s/he was perceived by others. This is something that can only occur if one separates the current reality of who one is and wants to be, from what others think that individual is and what they want the individual to be. In a similar context, identity can be connected with time as noted by UKD3, who said: "I think professional identity should move with time and you have got to adapt it to what is happening around you". The third idea is that the leader's identity is shaped by the expectations of the role, and work-related experiences. This shows the influence of work on what and who people become. In this regard, UKD1 said: "I did not decide to have this or be this. It is more or less the impact of working".

4.4 Libyan Data Analysis

4.4.1 Formative Years, Education, and Leadership Roles

All the participants in the Libyan sample were male, and it was interesting to note that without exception, each one had come from an extremely poor family that had struggled financially. Highlighting this background, one of the interviewees described not being able to go to university immediately on finishing the preparatory school, despite university education being free, due to the family being too poor and needing additional income. In the socialist Jamahiriya of the Gadafi regime, all education including university education became free for Libyan citizens in an attempt to increase the country's stock of human capital. Consequently, even poor families were able to send their sons and daughters to university, and for this not to be possible suggests extreme and dire family circumstances. Indeed, LD2's situation was just so, and because of this, he had to forego university and instead join a teacher training course which qualified

him to obtain a job in teaching. It was only later that he was able to go to university, after some years of paid employment. On this matter the interviewee said:

> "When I finished my preparatory school, I joined the Teachers Preparation Institute and that was due to the shortage of money. After graduation, I worked as a teacher for six years. Then I joined the university and obtained my BA" (LD2).

It was also clear from the data that none of the participants had parents who were themselves formally educated. This is not entirely unexpected since in the colonial period of the Italians, schooling was provided largely for the children of the Italian colonisers, and whilst improvements were made in the later period of British and French administration, schooling was not available for all, and certainly not compulsory. However, irrespective of the poor and uneducated circumstances of their families, all of the leaders interviewed commented that education had been highly appreciated by their parents as a means of securing their children's futures, both from an economic, and social perspective, since in Libya educated individuals are not only financially secure, but they also enjoy great respect within society. This point was made by LD5 who said:

> "My parents encouraged me to be educated although they were not educated. They suffered a lot financially and that is why they encouraged and supported me a lot to be educated as educated people were more respected and settled financially" (LD5).

This reference to educated people being "more respected" reflects the collectivist nature of Libyan society (Hofstede, 1980) in which individual prestige gained through educational achievement transfers to family prestige, and eventually to prestige for the tribe.

LD5 also mentioned one of the ways in which he received encouragement and support from his parents when he was young, saying:

> "I remember when I was young and during exam times, my parents used to stay up late along with me to encourage and support me to study more. They did this every night until I finished my exams" (LD5).

Such parental guidance, encouragement and support was quite definitely instrumental in the success of some of the interviewees during their school careers. And from school

success, they were able to obtain government scholarships to study abroad. In fact, three of the interviewees were given scholarships to enable them to study for a BA, MA, and PhD concurrently. In this respect LD4 said:

> "I did quite well at school and I got a scholarship to study in Germany where I obtained my BA, MA and PhD one after the other" (LD4).

This is an interesting comment, since it highlights the hidden rewards to be obtained for hard work in school, other than individual and collective prestige. Particularly, for a Libyan national to be given the opportunity to study in a Western environment for a long period of time would offer much more than the educational achievement, since during those years of study the person concerned would be expected to become fluent in a new language (in the case of LD4, German), and to integrate with the new culture. These two factors in themselves could help to establish the individual as a person with important additional skills and understanding that would contribute towards a lifelong career, and especially one involving some leadership responsibilities.

On this issue of leadership exposure, when the interviewees were asked whether they had held any leadership roles during their school careers, with the exception of just one person, all indicated not having done so. The sole participant (LD3) who was able to identify having some leadership experience at school, referred to a few occasions when he had some minor leadership tasks within the family, and in two organisations that he had joined. This experience had placed him in responsible positions with difficult tasks to execute, and where he had to demonstrate his strength in directing others, and generally performing well and obtaining results. It was at this stage that his own self-image as someone with leadership ability emerged, as the opportunities arising in these roles provided him with the means of exploring this potential. Indeed, this interviewee clearly acknowledged what had been gained from these experiences in terms of constructing his leadership identity, saying:

> "My father pushed me to be responsible for the family when I was young … I joined the Scout Association when I was young. I also joined the Student Union and it really did help in enriching my knowledge on leadership, and I had some leadership positions in this unit. These organisations taught me how to lead and to be led" (LD3).

It can be understood, therefore, that for the all the Libyan deans, the driving force to make the most of educational opportunities (which would in themselves provide the

vehicle for upward social mobility and potentially leadership in some form or other), was the family. And it can also be argued that it was the levels of poverty which spurred their parents into taking on such an influential role in the formative years of their children, when ideas about self-improvement were instilled within them. This understanding and personal experience of poverty and hardship formed part of the life history of all Libyan deans, and in analysing their motivation to become educated it does become apparent that this was valuable self-knowledge. Indeed, Traffinder (1995) documents the value of life history in this respect

4.4.2 Career and Leadership Roles

From the data collected, it emerged that two of the participants started their careers in teaching even before even they had achieved their BA degrees. In fact, one of those two began his BA while teaching. Another two participants started their careers in industry, and actually stayed a long time in their positions, one of them spending decades in industry. This was an experience which he genuinely appreciated, since he believed it had given him a definite identity as an industrialist, which when added to that of an academic, made him an all-rounder with particular expertise, as confirmed by his remarks to the effect that:

> "I worked in the (...) for more than 20 years then moved to university. It was great experience working in industry ... I cannot ignore my previous identity" (LD6).

So LD6 realised that the two social worlds of industry and academia endowed him with different professional identities. Moreover, his reference to his long industrial experience, and the fact that he had not forgotten it, suggests that the many years LD6 spent outside of academia had equipped him with knowledge and skills upon which he could build in the university situation. Certainly, he appreciated the experience as one which could not be brushed to one side, and which would inform his performance in his current role. Indeed, his reference to it being a 'great' experience confirms the value he placed on this. In this particular case, it can be argued that the individual concerned experienced two periods of accession, the first when he took his initial career post in industry, and the second when he divested himself of that position, and accepted a new career post in academia. Known as the 'moving on stage' in Ribbin's (20003) framework, this was a time when LD6 parcelled up decades of one type of experience and carried it forward into a new social world.

What is interesting, as indicated by one interviewee, is that although deans come from different backgrounds and experiences, and sometimes have different concerns about their roles, their ultimate focus is to serve their institutions to the best of their ability and to provide knowledge to students. In this regard, LD5 said:

> "I have to admit that different leaders have different priorities, values and concerns. However, we share almost the same purpose in this role and we do it well". (LD5)

These sentiments echo with those expressed by all the UK deans, all of whom demonstrate the role played by families and early socialisation mechanisms (schools, etc.) in developing moral values and attributes (Parker, 2002).

Most interviewees indicated that when starting their careers in HE, they were appointed to posts in departments that reflected their degree specialism. Indeed, this is an entirely logical situation given that undergraduates study a particular subject in order to become proficient in that field and subsequently find a job where the knowledge and skills acquired at university are used. In fact, this was reflected in the demands of their original teaching posts and in their later role as deans. It seemed to be an essential requirement for further leadership since despite the fact that some of those participants immediately assumed leadership positions, they were, nonetheless, required to teach certain hours as well as discharging their leadership responsibilities. The rationale for this split between teaching and leading was that it would enable them to remain close to their subjects. This was certainly a belief held by some interviewees, yet others considered the duty to teach a negative aspect of the dean's role. The former were keen to keep the door open for a return to teaching if they decided to forego their leadership/management role, and believed this strategy to be the one to ensure this could happen painlessly. On the other hand, the latter considered it very difficult to teach and provide leadership for the faculty at the same time since the managerial aspect of the role was extremely taxing.

In fact, the need to jointly lead and teach was perceived by four of the interviewees as extremely time-consuming and one which meant it was very difficult to stay connected with academia, yet one of the participants commented that he had always maintained his

academic interests during his deanship role, explaining that most of his publications had been written whilst he was in leadership positions. In this respect, he said:

> "I have never left teaching and researching and most of my publications were during my leadership roles" (LD3).

It is clear from this comment that LD3's self-image was that of an academic, involved in teaching and learning, despite having been providing leadership/management in various such roles for more than two decades. His identity was firmly located in his academic discipline, with his managerial obligations almost being side-stepped. That said, given his contribution to research and publication over a long period, LD3 could definitely also be seen as an academic leader.

The interviewees who expressed difficulty in discharging the joint responsibilities of the dean's role did, however, perceive their identities to lie in management, since this was the aspect of their daily lives which assumed greater importance (i.e. it was difficult to teach with all the managerial responsibilities, suggesting that the managerial responsibilities came first).

In respect of leadership roles, three of the participants had some leadership roles prior to their current ones. For instance, LD5 commented:

> "I had some leadership roles when I was working in the company and also in this faculty as well."

However, an interesting feature to emerge was that when the three interviewees who had been sponsored to study abroad for their BA, MA, and PhD degrees, returned to Libya to take up posts in HE, they were immediately appointed to leadership positions irrespective of the fact that the posts in HE were their first jobs. In this respect, R3 said:

> "When I came back from abroad, I was appointed at university as head of department and then as a dean". (LD3)

This comment echoes the issue raised earlier concerning the prestige attached to those who have studied overseas and been exposed to a foreign language and to different cultural traditions. In particular, during the Gadafi regime, and its hostile foreign policy towards the West, the teaching of English was dropped in Libyan schools and a whole

generation of Libyans were educated in Arabic only, meaning that when the regime changed its policy to one of liberalisation, there was a distinct and desperate shortage of Libyan nationals of a certain age who could accurately converse and do business in English. Hence, the possession of such fluency was seen as an important characteristic which would theoretically make a dean more effective, especially when required to communicate with colleagues on an international scale.

Also of interest was the admission from one interviewee that he was appointed directly as a dean despite never having held any leadership position whatsoever throughout his life. This person, and LD3 explained the reason for their appointments, with LD3 indicating that he was the only local Libyan lecturer in the department. On this matter he said:

> "all the lecturers in the departments were foreigners and I was the only Libyan lecturer". (LD3)

LD1 claimed that there was a shortage of PhD holders in the organisation, meaning that many of those individuals in leadership positions were non-academics, which in itself caused problems for the Institute as decisions concerning academia were made by those without any experience, and therefore genuine understanding, of the issues to be managed. He said:

> "When I came back from the UK after finishing my PhD, there were only a few people holding PhDs in this organisation, and the faculty I was asked to lead had suffered a great deal from being managed and directed by non-academic leaders. Therefore, it was natural for me to be offered this position, and I was encouraged by the faculty and society generally, to accept it". (LD1)

Clearly, some very important and interesting issues are raised by these two interviewees, since the question can be asked as to whether an institution should be appointing people to lead academics who are not academics themselves. In fact, LD2 possessed only a BA degree and had never worked in HE, so it was highly questionable whether he had the capability of leading an academic unit. In this scenario, one might wonder how LD2 was perceived by academics, what academic values he possessed, and hence, what he might be able to offer in the role of leader. Indeed, he was little more than a manager operating on a day-by-day basis to ensure the smooth running of the

faculty, and not an individual who could provide academic leadership. Speaking on this issue, LD2 readily admitted that it was necessary for him to investigate what deans in other HE institutions did so that he could gain an appreciation of management/leadership responsibilities in the HE environment. This, he believed had been helpful to him as he obtained some clues as to how HE institutions are led and what the priorities in leaders' roles are. Undoubtedly, without this level of proactivity LD2 would have had no other real avenue for gaining insight into how to lead a faculty in an HEI since there were no formal leadership development programmes available. He openly said:

> "I had no idea how to lead this institute. I had to visit some other institutions to see how things work and what the priorities in our roles are" (LD2).

Clearly, observations of other deans operating, albeit in different universities would be valuable for a complete novice, but it is likely that such observations and discussions would foster an appreciation only of the managerial context, and not be useful in terms of academic leadership, which must involve a degree of expertise in the academic discipline of the faculty some way above undergraduate level. After all, it is difficult to appreciate how a person with a BA degree can direct the academic development of staff holding Masters' and PhD degrees, and the development of curricula at this level.

An extremely important issue in respect of appointments to leadership roles in HEIs in Libya is the mechanism by which these are bestowed upon incumbents as the route to deanship is not the same as in the UK. In the UK as mentioned earlier in the chapter, all deans were proactive in applying for the posts in open competition, and there could be no real credence given to the suggestion that those deans had arrived at deanship 'by accident'. In Libya, however, deans are appointed, singled-out by the powers that be either within the institutions or directly by government agencies, and there is a heavy influence wielded by society on individuals to accept certain positions, as already indicated by LD1. In fact, the word society was repeatedly mentioned in the data, suggesting a pressure-bearing entity. Indeed, three of the interviewees made it clear that they were affected by the pressure from society to accept their deanships. After reporting the encouragement he received from society in this respect, LD2 said: "I hesitated a lot at the beginning but then I made up my mind and accepted the offer". This state of affairs begs the question as to how committed a dean can be, and how soon

it is before disenchantment (see Day and Bakioglu, 1996; Ribbins, 2003) with the role sets in. Moreover, from the examples just discussed, and the knowledge of how individuals find themselves in the position of academic leader in Libya, it is apparent that leadership experience is not a requirement in Libyan HE organisations. Furthermore, because individuals are 'appointed' to positions on the basis of what top managers believe they can bring to the organisation, whether or not the individuals concerned want to go down the career route of deanship, it may well be that the decision to appoint is based on the political contacts held by an individual, and in all other aspects that person may be totally unsuitable for the role of dean. One particular interviewee confessed that he struggled tremendously at the beginning of his job as a leader, and was able to identify examples of how his lack of experience showed through, even in simple tasks. In this connection, he said:

> "I remember in my first year as a dean I always hesitated even when signing up final results" (LD1).

This scenario was recognised by all participants, and the issue of experience was an important theme. Most of the interviewees were adamant that experience of leadership was essential for any person stepping into the role of dean. LD3, for instance, said:

> "Before deans are appointed, they should have had some experience of leadership, especially in an academic environment. They should have worked as head of department first".

However, societal influence, as already observed, can work to make such an ideal, unattainable. Society generally, as spoken of by the interviewees, relates to people within the organisation, and those outside, connected to the place where the organisation exists, and where the leaders within it come from. In this respect it is worth mentioning that some members of that wider society, who seek to exert their influence, have no clue as to what actually happens in HE, and cannot therefore, be offering encouragement on the basis of the individual concerned being right for the job. In fact, some such people have never actually been to school, and consequently have little appreciation of the world of education, let alone that of academia. Not being a part of that world, they are not in a position to make informed comments or judgements.

What emerges from this observation is the recognition of the power of tribal society, which works to ensure that only people from the same area or town where the organisation is located can do a good job for the organisation and for the town. Libya is characterised by tribalism, a fact which the interviewees emphasised in their discussions. The word 'tribe' was a recurring theme in the data, as were the problems resulting from this way of life. Indeed, from the interview data it was apparent that all participants perceived the tribal society of Libya, which is not open to changes to tradition, as placing obstacles in their path in terms of their leadership roles. In this regard, LD5 said:

> "It is a narrow-minded society and if you (dean or any leader) do not provide something tangible, the society will consider you unsuccessful as a leader regardless of the circumstances you have had to face" (LD5).

So, it is seen that one outcome of tribalism is the need for people who have been appointed to leadership positions via tribal influence, to perform in line with the expectations of the tribe, and this is a tall order, especially if the incumbent does not want to be in that position. Again, the cultural theory offered by Hofstede (1980) is a useful analytical tool since its observations of a society scoring highly on collectivism, show the predisposition to expect individuals to behave as members of the collective and not in their own right. The system, as operated, means that those assigned to leadership roles, are held responsible by society if no positive changes or improvements are brought about by their leadership, yet the society itself may have no genuine appreciation of the barriers such leaders face or the trials and tribulations they may have had to deal with in the role of dean, especially those associated with their total lack of leadership experience and/or training. This type of outcome may well generate a feeling of disenchantment within deans whose main wish is to be a member of the teaching faculty only, particularly when they do not have the resources to even attempt the post of leadership to which they are appointed.

In this research, it was clear that most of the participants had no proper experience of leadership and were not ready to take on board the roles and responsibilities of a dean, yet they were expected to provide good leadership. In some cases it was only the desire to work that persuaded them to accept the job, as noted by LD4 who said:

> "To be honest I was not ready for this post at all. I think it was the true desire and support of others and my team which helped me doing the job". (LD4)

The above discussion also raises another important issue which is the yardstick by which society values the changes and improvements which individuals in their posts as deans might make. If society is largely ignorant of the mechanisms within HE, of what is required of the dean, and of the limits of his authority, there is no logical basis on which deans can be evaluated by society. Clearly, such assessment is made on the basis of self-interest, as indicated by LD6 when he referred to the fact that people value and appreciate things if they serve their interests and are aligned with their values. This was articulated by LD6 in the words:

> "Working in a narrow minded tribal society is difficult. People will always appreciate what you do in your job if it serves their personal interests; otherwise you will always be someone worth criticising (negatively)" (LD6).

In fact, given other cultural predispositions within Libyan society, and structural considerations within Libyan HEIs, it seems that deans are continually open to criticism since their job is fraught with difficulties. Teaching staff generally are aware of the 'promotion' route to dean and unlike in the UK scenario where the dean gains legitimate authority through open competition for the post, a newly-appointed dean may attract no respect from his colleagues whatsoever. In this situation, it can be hard to secure co-operation. That in itself is a big obstacle as the cultural disposition is to shy away from taking the initiative and to expect to operate in a highly rule-governed environment (Hofstede, 1980), yet if there is no respect for the orders given or requests made, and no possibility of delegating responsibility with any hope of a task being completed effectively, the dean is in an extremely awkward place. Moreover, the bureaucratic decision-making process provides little encouragement to try to excite staff to sweep in new initiatives as the momentum swiftly disappears when potential interesting changes lie languishing within the heavily centralised system awaiting approval from the higher echelons.

Deans themselves could usually understand why they had been placed in the role, referring to certain critical incidents prior to their career in HE, and which had become important in their lives generally. For instance, the decision to take a scholarship to study in Germany was a key turning point for LD4 as it had made him an attractive

choice for top management. Specifically, his time in Germany had helped him to acquire knowledge from a developed country as well to learn about other people's culture, and to become fluent in another language. In this regard, LD4 says:

> "I can't deny the amount of knowledge I gained during my study abroad. It was great experience that always will stay in my memories. In addition to that I learned about western culture and Germany specifically. I am glad I took that opportunity". (LD4)

Later in those leaders' different career journeys, some other critical incidents seemed to have become important to their professional lives, in that they helped them to exercise the role of leader in their present positions. In the early stages of their careers, the frequent policy and systems changes occurring in Libyan HE seemed critical moments for some of the participants which made them focus only on routine operational matters, rather than on strategy for the future, or even for the near future. It had been a case of fire-fighting to ensure that the endless round of policy changes were complied with, and this way of working was referred to by LD2 as being influential in his current leadership style. Commenting on its impact, he said:

> "The constant change in regulations makes me think of what I have to do in the present time only and never think about tomorrow. I have learnt this and I lead based on this" (LD2).

Such frequent regulatory change was a feature of the old political regime since it prevented people from becoming too familiar with patterns of working, and hence from gaining power through such stability. As the quote from LD2 reveals, the constant changes precluded him from any level of strategic thinking. The dean was essentially to function as an operational manager, responding to a regulatory framework imposed from the bureaucracy, rather than as a strategist or visionary.

Unsurprisingly, different people who had been in the lives of the interviewees were cited as having significant influences upon them in their formative years and career development. Parents, teachers, and society were major influencers and encouragers in the formative years, and in their years of accession to their careers, and in their subsequent development, participants identified colleagues, superiors, and society generally as well having been significant in their influence for various reasons. It was

noted that many of these people had remained influential throughout their professional careers.

What can be inferred from the above discussion specifically, and from the data obtained in general, is that most of these Libyan deans had never planned to be in their current leadership positions, and that their 'accidental' rise to leadership was indeed much more genuine than that claimed by UK deans. Certainly, most of them made it clear that they had found themselves as dean completely unexpectedly, and not with any real desire on their part. This is an interesting point, which can be analysed in the context of Arab culture which rates highly in terms of its propensity to avoid risk (as noted by Hofstede, 1980). In such circumstances, individuals are reluctant to apply for positions of authority on the grounds that they might be required to take decisions which might subsequently be proved to have been bad ones, and for which blame is then laid. The fact that most interviewees felt they had drifted into the role of dean supports the notion that they would never have considered putting themselves forward for it.

Arguably, therefore, none of the interviewees had undergone any specific preparation for the role, yet when asked about leadership training within their institutions for deans in post, only two of the participants reported having had such training, and that that had been given four years after becoming dean. Even more surprising is that the training was neither provided by the HE institution nor by the Libyan government, but rather by foreign embassies in Libya which had essentially sponsored such developments. However, those deans who had started their careers in industry had undergone some kind of leadership training when they were in industry. This confirms that HE does not recognise the value of leadership training despite the fact all those leaders who had received training indicated how beneficial it had been, and recommended that HE organisations should provide such opportunities. In this regard LD6 said:

> "The training was really helpful. One of the main benefits was on how to make the right decisions and how to manage time effectively. Time management is important. I also met a lot of people doing the same job. I do recommend that universities provide senior leaders with those training courses" (LD6).

4.4.3 The Nature and Importance of the Role

From the data obtained, it is clear that senior leaders in Libyan HE are charged with a range of roles and responsibilities which are characterised by their challenging and

multi-faceted nature. Furthermore, the challenge presented was often associated with the obstacles to the effective discharge of the dean's role and deans' lack of ability to actually implement processes for which they are responsible. As indicated by most participants, the role demands that the dean monitor both academic and non-academic staff, examinations, results, and transcripts; and conduct regular meetings, and apply the university regulations and policies. It also requires deans to field problems as and when necessary, as noted by LD4 who said:

> "The dean is responsible for supervising both the academic and non-academic departments in the faculty. The dean is also responsible for conducting a monthly meeting with heads of department to check the progress of education and the problems that may raise. And if we can't sort these problems out, the dean simply transfers them to the university committee" (LD4).

The above quotation shows three important dimensions of the dean's role. Firstly, there is the aspect involving the supervision of academic and non-academic departments, and four of the interviewees considered that the supervision of academic departments was one of the most important responsibilities of deans. This argument was rationalised on the basis that "the main goal behind the existence of this organisation is to provide knowledge and education to students" (LD1), and that entails leaders having to "provide the right atmosphere for students to study and for the academics to give their best" (LD2). LD2 continued by saying: "sometimes I have to monitor lecturers in their classrooms to make sure that the educational process is going in the right direction". This quotation by LD2 highlights a remarkable issue which was mentioned by three participants, that being the act of becoming involved in the academic work of the faculty, or in the work of the head of department. Clearly, some element of contradiction is present in this type of behaviour, since the dean is charged with ensuring the right atmosphere for academics to perform well (provision of support, resources, training, etc.), yet direct interference with the business of teaching or the work undertaken by heads of departments could be seen as causing an oppressive environment.

In this respect, it is worth reflecting on the earlier comments made about tribalism and the societal influence brought to bear upon deans not to make mistakes, since it could be fear of criticism from those who have encouraged the promotion to dean that prompts some deans to continually check on what their staff are doing. That situation apart,

however, there is nothing in the data to suggest that deans actually enjoyed this aspect of their job.

In respect of the responsibility to supervise the non-academic departments, it is mainly the registration office and the management affairs office that are concerned. However, one particular interviewee observed that this task can be regarded as a difficult one for any individual who considers himself purely as an academic with no specialised administrative or managerial skills. Speaking of this problem, LD1 said:

> "my mentality is purely academic and I always find it difficult to manage non-academic issues". (LD1)

The second important role for deans as identified by LD4 is to conduct monthly meetings between heads of department, the registration office, and the lecturers' office. As indicated by four participants, these meetings are used to monitor the education process and deal with issues that heads of departments have been unable to resolve. Speaking of this, LD5 said:

> "it is my duty to monitor the education process with heads of departments in the regular meetings as well as to discuss issues occurring in their departments if those heads are unable to manage them" (LD5).

It is also within deans' responsibilities to monitor examinations, results, and transcripts. What is clear from the data is that less senior leaders transfer the problems they are unable to resolve to more senior leaders, and those leaders send the problems they cannot manage further up the university hierarchy. Indeed, one of the participants referred to the leader role as an 'exporter', saying:

> "Heads of departments transfer their problems to me when they can't sort them out. And I export the faculty problems to the president if we haven't been able to resolve them within the faculty". (LD3)

What can be inferred from the data in general, and from the above discussions, is that the senior leader's role involves the management of day-to-day issues and ensuring the maintenance of the educational process. However, when those leaders were asked whether they considered themselves to be leaders or managers, or indeed both, most of them reported that their job involved the exercise of leadership and management

together. Their suggestion was of a strong link between the two, with effective leadership depending upon the ability to manage well. Hence, within the Libyan context, the dean's job was perceived to require a skilled manager who could subsequently be an effective leader. And from this it is evident that the primary role was one of management, with leadership occurring when, and if, the management tasks were completed. Indeed, there is some contradiction between what those leaders actually do and their self-image as leader/manager, because as clarified by LD4, the job is simply one of managing the whole enterprise according to the institutional rules and regulations. In this respect, LD4 said:

> "To be honest, when it comes to theory, we could say that our job or role is both management and leadership. But when it comes to practice and real life, we (deans) just implement and apply regulations and laws" (LD4).

The above participant continued to justify his statement by adding that senior leaders are powerless and have no authority, merely acting as administrators. He provided an example, saying "the dean is allowed to sign BA, MA, and PhD certificates and transcripts but he has no authority to sign a 1000 LD cheque", which is equivalent to £400. When offered to the researcher, this information was in the form of a complaint, an expression of dissatisfaction associated with a very important issue that was repeatedly coded in the data, that being the problem of centralisation within HE and its impact upon senior leaders. Four of the interviewees made it clear that HE is characterised by over-centralisation, making it highly bureaucratic and causing disillusionment amongst senior leaders such that they do not fulfil the duties required of them. Interestingly, it seems there is a link between the effect of bureaucracy on the application of leadership skills. In this respect, one participant said:

> "although there are many management tasks in my role, I sometimes believe that I am a leader and that is because of the time spent and the fighting to get these things done because of the bureaucracy" (LD6).

Hence, bureaucracy was considered by some of the interviewees as one of the main reasons why the job of dean was considered a difficult one. Not surprisingly, when those leaders were asked what characteristics senior leaders should possess in order to succeed, diplomacy and patience were the most repeated ones. However, one participant raised the issue of how leaders should be appointed and the fact that at the appointment

stage, panels should ensure that candidates possess the appropriate characteristics. This person continued by referring to the nature of society in Third World countries, citing the tendency for individuals to prioritise their personal and tribal interests above those of the workplace. Commenting on the necessary characteristics of an effective leader in Libyan HE, and on the appointment system, LD3 said:

> "Patience and diplomacy are very important characteristics for senior leaders to succeed. However, when it comes to appointing senior leaders, it is almost impossible to know whether those people hold these personal characteristics. Therefore, appointment should be done by election and within the faculty itself, so the faculty members can chose the right dean for them on the basis of their experience of that person's leadership ability. However, in the Third World societies, people tend to elect or chose people who serve their personal interests rather than people who are qualified and capable of doing the job. Therefore, if the dean is not wisely chosen, this election can lead to the destruction of the organisation" (LD3).

Within this comment, LD3 alludes to the problems of tribalism which are seen in the appointment of people to positions purely on the basis of tribal affiliation, irrespective of qualification for the job or merit. Again, the issue of societal expectation, a direct outcome of Libya's culture and traditions, looms as a major stumbling block in the effort to ensure non-prejudicial leadership in HE. The actual qualification required for the job is reflected as being the possession of the following essential characteristics and skills: good experience, good decision-making skills, good communication skills, the ability to listen to people, trustworthiness, being wise, and being sociable, but the criterion for appointment is not usually any one of these qualities; rather it is the use to the institution that the newly-appointed might bring through political and tribal contacts, or merely the paying back of a favour to the tribe or extended family/social circle. LD1, for instance, offered comments regarding the characteristics and skills which should be looked for in senior leaders.

> "Deans should be good decision-makers and their decisions should be based on solid grounds. It is also important for deans to be good listeners, open- minded, and sociable, and for them to accept ideas regardless of personal differences and social backgrounds. Deans should trust people who work for them until it is proven that they should not. Deans should avoid capitalism in leadership. Regarding decisions, I always take my time before making any decision. Once a decision is made, it is irreversible even if it was proven not right after that. However, most decisions which were made after deep investigations were correct" (LD1).

What is surprising in the above quotation is that the interviewee shows a welcoming of ideas and opinions from others and wishes to avoid capitalism, but admitting at the same time that once a decision has been taken, there is no opportunity to change it. Clearly, this represents another contradiction between the claim that this leader operates in a co-operative and friendly manner in the decision-making process, yet in an authoritative way after a decision has been reached, refusing to believe it may have been the wrong one. This might be seen as another cultural trait, reflecting the tendency to avoid risk in order to avoid blame should a problem occur after a decision. By responding in this way, and refusing to believe there has been anything wrong in his decision, R1 has an in-built way of ensuring that no blame comes upon him.

Within the context of essential characteristics for senior leaders, five of the participants mentioned that they should have very good social connections. In this respect, the deans explained and justified the importance of being sociable, again referring to the tribal nature of Libyan society, which required them to use their personal connections to be able to lead their institutions effectively. In fact, it is customary and indeed, expected, that deans use social connections to arrive at solutions to problems. There is no stigma attached to such behaviour, and as LD2 indicated, this has become 'unwritten law', with even more senior leaders recommending to deans that they use their social connections for the good of their faculties, since the university institutions themselves do not have a good track record of producing the necessary resources for the educational enterprise. Speaking on this, LD4 said:

> "Sometimes I have to use my personal connections to get things done and to provide certain materials for the faculty. I usually don't depend on the university to provide things for the faculty as they take ages to provide them and that is if they provide them. That is one of the unlimited roles of the dean. Therefore, deans need to make good social relations and connections to serve their organisations. In addition, the authorised people at the university ask you to sort out your issues by yourself using social and personal connections" (LD4).

The above quotation shows the difficulty of leading and managing in Libyan HE. It does not, however, reveal the fact that some deans resent this situation. Indeed, some of the interviewees were not happy to operate in this way, believing resources should be provided by the institution, and complaining that they are forced to behave in a way which goes against their personal principles. In this respect, LD2 said:

> "I have been pushed unwillingly to behave according to the present situation. I had to take advantage of my connections to serve this organisation" (LD2).

Moreover, the use of personal connections for material gain is not professional, and can cause psychological dissonance for those senior leaders who have spent their lives developing their professional identity. Undoubtedly, the use of personal connections is not desirable since to be in receipt of a favour means that at some future time that favour must be repaid and the circumstances of that repayment might be very uncomfortable for the payer. Essentially, therefore, as soon as a dean uses his connections, he is placed in a compromising position, which can do nothing but detract from any effort to be professional and/or to deliver a quality product (education). For example, the use of connections might result in much-needed funding for a research project, but the funder might then attempt to direct the outcome of the research.

Another important and difficult aspect of deanship, which was mentioned by four interviewees, was the people management function, and the characteristics of the Arab, and particularly Libyan people. LD2 described them (especially academics) as "warm-blooded people, who do not like being forced to do things even their jobs, which is why deans have to be wise and diplomatic". This situation is an unwelcome outcome of the tribal and extended family society prevailing in Libya because individuals who are placed in their jobs through the influence of family members and tribesmen feel they are protected from the rules and regulations of the institution and basically operate as a law unto themselves. Hence, deans have the difficult task of trying to persuade individuals that the university rules over-ride any other considerations, and that they should comply with them in their work.

Clearly, as evidenced in the above discussions, the leadership role in Libyan HE is complex and difficult to discharge. This leads to the question of what kind of leadership style can be adopted in order to combat the various influences, and lead/manage effectively in this atmosphere. Based on the data collected, the leaders interviewed can be classified into two groups. Those in the first group believed their style to be a combination of flexibility and firmness, and whilst it might be hard to envisage how a leader could demonstrate both, those leaders did claim the effectiveness of their approach as it had arisen because of certain experience in different sectors. In fact one of those leaders related this style to one of the prophet Mohamed's companions who

said “don’t be so flexible that you will be pressed, and don’t be so rigid that you will be broken”. This quotation had obviously had an impact upon the leader in question. As a matter of fact, another leader made it clear that the only person who has a huge influence on him is the prophet Mohamed (PBUH) and that such influence is apparent both in his professional and personal life. In this respect, he said:

> “The only one who has had a big influence on me in all aspects of my life is our prophet as he urges us to work hard, respect our jobs, do it as it should be and to the best of our knowledge” (LD6).

The point made by LD6 is an interesting one as it highlights the imperative for all Muslims to give of their absolute best in all walks of life, including work, yet as indicated in an earlier comment, it is difficult for deans to manage some people as they have no respect for the regulations in their workplace, behaviour which is in direct contradiction of religious teachings.

Considering leadership style again though, the second group expressed the belief that they were unable to genuinely identify themselves as using a particular approach, and that other people were the best ones to provide such a description, although it would have to be borne in mind that such assessments would be based on the extent to which the leadership style coincided with their interests. However, one of the interviewees in this group did believe that the evaluation of his leadership approach by others was in fact correct. In this respect, he said:

> “I cannot tell what my style is, but I can tell what other people say about it. My leadership style is described as a dictatorship and not flexible. Personally, I agree with that and I can explain why. It is very difficult to take decisions in a democratic atmosphere in this organisation as most of the people who I work with, and especially some heads of departments, are stubborn and continually try to impose their personal ideas upon the faculty. These ideas might be irrelevant or completely against the faculty’s interests. Consequently, such behaviour has pushed me to be a strong leader, to take tough decisions without consultation, and hence, to be a dictator” (LD1).

This quotation shows the impact of the difficulty associated with people management on the choice of leadership approach. It also demonstrates that within the organisation there are many self-opinionated individuals (heads and deans as well as ordinary lecturing staff) who compete to obtain the outcome which satisfies their interests. There

seems to be a constant power struggle in evidence. Clearly, this scenario is one which serves to hinder the educational process as the dean is unable to manage and lead a faculty without the support of others, even those with whom he does not agree. However, there does not seem to have been any collaborative action to arrive at a form of decision-making which takes into account the nature of academic decision-making. As academics are generally considered to be open-minded individuals, it is surprising that no alternative to dictatorship has been found.

Within the same context of what senior leaders actually do in HE is the issue of whether they teach, and as already discussed, in Libyan HEIs the tradition is for deans to undertake a given number of hours teaching in order to remain attached to their subjects and abreast of new developments. In this respect, LD3 said: "deans are supposed to teach a certain number of hours in order to stay linked with the field". However, some leaders indicated that this requirement to teach as well as to manage created a very heavy workload, resulting in fatigue. Nonetheless, they saw the value of keeping up-to-date with their subject since they were aware of the difficulties faced when returning to teaching after leaving a management/leadership role which had taken up their entire time, to the exclusion of academic work. LD5 referred to this dilemma, saying:

> I sometimes find it extremely difficult to teach and manage/lead at the same. Being in management/leadership is time-killing, and sometimes I can't find the time to prepare the lessons. However, one has to be aware of the potential for losing interest in teaching and falling behind the times, if teaching is stopped altogether" (LD5).

From the data collected in general, and from the interviews particularly, it is possible to correctly describe the senior leader's role as one which has two dimensions, these being: operational and academic. Based on the codes extracted from the data, the operational role is seen to be mainly connected with managing daily issues such as managing people and implementing regulations, whereas, the academic role is concerned with teaching, research and providing the right atmosphere for knowledge to spread.

In general, what can be inferred from the data is that the senior leaders who participated are extremely frustrated by their work. They find themselves having to undertake senior leader responsibilities in a very difficult and complicated atmosphere, which is virtually devoid of any support for them. In many instances during the interviews, the word 'fight' was mentioned in the context of achieving outcomes for their organisations.

Furthermore, the interviewees felt very strongly that their efforts were never rewarded financially as their salaries do not reflect their additional duties but are rather exactly the same as those enjoyed by lecturers in the same organisation. Clearly, this begs the question of why such individuals accepted the dean's position, and in this respect, it was obvious from all participants that they saw themselves as being able to make a difference, to improve educational achievement, and hence to enhance Libya's stock of human capital. In this regard, LD2 described himself as patriotic, saying:

> "The reason behind accepting this leadership position was that I am a patriotic person and I always try to take a part in developing my country as I am a good believer in the difference that education can make" (LD2).

However, when the participants were asked whether they were planning to accept other leadership positions further up the organisational hierarchy, not one person said this was the case. In fact, two of the leaders mentioned that they would simply leave their future to chance, one of them saying that if the right offer was made to him, he might think about taking it as he felt he had become an expert in HE. This was LD1, who said:

> "I don't have any plans for any further leadership position, and I am leaving this purely to chance. However, if the right offer comes, I will probably take it as I feel I have great experience in this sector" (LD1).

This response is interesting in that it can be seen as a reflection of a religious attitude towards life. In Islamic teaching, everything that happens to an individual is the will of God; hence, the need for career planning might be thought redundant since God will take care in this respect. However, not all participants were driven in the same way, since all the others gave a clear indication that they did not want to be appointed to any more leadership positions, due either to the difficulty of the role (especially in the current climate), or to the fact that they were reaching retirement. In this regard, LD6 said:

> "I have been in this position for many years and I am reaching the end of my career. I have seen how difficult this role is and I have done my best to make this organisation succeed. I think the time has arrived to retire and rest for the rest of my life" (LD6).

So far, the life histories of the leaders interviewed, and the circumstances they went through until reaching their current positions have been highlighted, as also has the

nature of their role as deans. At this point it is important to explore these individuals' attitudes towards what they do as deans, how they perceive themselves, and essentially what identity they hold.

4.4.4 Perception of the Senior Leader's Role: Leaders, Managers or Academics?

Regarding the perception of the importance of the senior leader's role, and that of people at other levels in the university, the over-riding theme to emerge from the data was the perception that deans are crucial within the organisation, and some interviewees even believed the deans to be more important than more senior leaders by virtue of their relationship with students and with academics who provide their education. In this respect, LD1 said:

> "I totally believe that the dean's role is more important than all the other leadership positions in the university and that includes the president's job. The reason behind this is that deans have direct contact with students and academics" (LD1).

Clearly, this interviewee saw himself as interacting with a very wide span of individuals and had a strong idea of where he and the other deans were placed in that 'figured world'. However, the staff lower down the hierarchy also believe the senior leader's role to be important, considering it as one that confers power, authority, and prestige, thereby reflecting the professional image possessed by LD1 back to the dean. Nonetheless, some senior leaders point out that this is an erroneous perception which is held mainly because those individuals have no real appreciation of what deans actually do, and the difficulties under which they labour. Those who have been in this or a similar position of leadership themselves, are familiar with the challenges posed, and the fact that it is actually a position which embodies no power whatsoever. LD3, for instance, said:

> "People who have never been in leadership positions, especially in HE, look at it as a prestigious position that gives deans power and authority. But people who have experienced this position (deanship) or similar ones - they know how difficult it is and how time-consuming it is" (LD3).

Without doubt, deans are considered to be powerful as confirmed by LD5 who mentioned that some staff believe they are responsible for formulating university regulations. In this respect he said:

> "People who work for me think that the dean is the key man in this organisation and that he is responsible for everything in the faculty. They sometimes think that deans can even pass a law" (LD5).

It is perhaps not too surprising that some of those lower down the university hierarchy are ignorant of the detail of the dean's role, since the predisposition to power distance highlighted by Hofstede (1980) would suggest that hierarchical levels keep themselves very much to themselves, imposing a distance (as shown earlier in this data) between them and the next tier of management. Consequently, the ideas they possess about what those further up the organisational pyramid actually do, are not the result of direct communication with their managers, but rather from supposition.

Regarding the perception of more senior leaders of the role of dean, most of the interviewees expressed the belief that because most of the more senior leaders had been in the dean's position at some time in their careers, they knew the challenges and importance associated with the role. However, some of the participants did comment that deans were evaluated by more senior leaders on their performance in certain respects, and that their importance as deans (i.e. in terms of one dean being more effective than another) varied according to what level of compliance they could achieve from subordinates. For example, LD5 referred to the degree of effectiveness displayed by the dean and the amount of influence he could bring to bear in particular situations. In this respect, LD5 said:

> "The dean's role is more or less important, depending on the effectiveness of the dean in question, and how influential this person is as a leader" (LD5).

In respect of the effectiveness of deans, LD1 introduced an interesting factor impinging upon this, when he referred to the distance between the faculty concerned and the main building of the university. This was known to be an important variable in the amount of influence held by a dean in terms of securing resources, etc., as those deans who were physically situated close to the main building had more opportunity to follow through their requests with the bureaucracy and generally be in a position where they could make their presence felt rather more than deans who spent their time at a distance from

the administrative centre. LD1 also raised the issue of the age of the faculty and how that might help the dean to be more visible and recognisable. His overall comments on these issues were summed up in the following quotation:

> "More senior leaders look at the faculties and determine importance from different perspectives. For example, how old the university is and how far the faculty is from the main campus of the university are both variables. This might be strange, but it is true. Because of the bureaucratic management system in Libya, deans of faculties which are near the university campus normally visit and chase their issues at the university more than those which are far" (LD1).

The above example highlights two important points worthy of mention, the first being the use of the age of the faculty as a criterion for senior management support. Clearly, the longer-established faculties with a history of operation are considered as important and worthy of support, yet the question can be posed as to why they should receive more than newer faculties that have no such history on which to rely, and which need encouragement to enable them to thrive. Secondly, it seems perfectly logical for leaders of faculties only a short distance away from the main building of the university to capitalise upon the opportunity to continually chase their requests since universities are bureaucratic institutions, characterised by heavy centralisation which means that it takes a long time for requests to work their way through the management system. Consequently, there needs to be a solution for deans of faculties sited away from the main building so that they too can cut through the red tape and operate as effectively as their more fortunate counterparts near the central offices, and escape the criticism of failure. LD1 referred to this fact, complaining that deans based away from the university's main office are unfairly compared with deans who are close to the main building, and that there needed to be techniques they could use to overcome this handicap. On this issue, he said:

> "Those deans who are located far from the main campus have to use other temptations such as inviting the important people at the university to their faculties, and trying to establish a social relationship with them. Otherwise, the dean will not achieve the required goal and, hence, will be considered unsuccessful" (LD1).

It seems that the more senior leaders are actually responsible for causing much of the complicated atmosphere in which deans must operate because they demonstrate weak leadership putting the onus onto deans to settle problems themselves despite not having

the authority to do so. LD4 provided an example of the peculiar way in which more senior leaders respond to problems, and how their behaviour serves to make the situation more complex, saying:

> "One common problem in HE is that more senior leaders, especially decision-makers, always avoid taking decisions that some individuals will not be satisfied with, and they throw the ball to others less senior, like deans, to take decisions. This way, those more senior leaders try to appear as good leaders who don't complicate issues and who don't refuse to serve people, so they keep their social standing. Therefore, they always export their problems to others although they themselves are supposed to take the decisions. That's why I consider the senior leaders' role is very difficult" (LD4).

This example of the behaviour of more senior leaders points to weak leadership at the top of Libyan HEIs, and subsequently, to the conclusion that the role of dean is made much more difficult. However, as well as handling these problems coming from further up the hierarchy, deans must also keep in touch with their own academic discipline by teaching. This clearly poses a duality in the role of dean, and hence, the issue of the deans' self-image must be investigated and in this respect, it is necessary to determine what has shaped that identity.

Based on the codes extracted from the data, it can be confirmed that those leaders' identities seem to have been developed through a mixture of historical biography, sociological, and professional experience. The interaction with others seemed to be vital in this context. For instance, societal factors seemed to have played an important role in shaping those leaders' identities as they were repeatedly mentioned in the data, thereby reinforcing again the importance of the world in which the deans perceive themselves to be operating. Such factors were also often linked with the political system as this seemed to have had the most negative influence upon leaders, as indicated by LD6 who said:

> "It is the nature of Libyan society, and its corrupt and unstable political system that has played a vital role in shaping my professional identity. Regarding society, it is a narrow-minded society and if you (dean or any leader) do not provide something tangible, the society will consider you an unsuccessful leader regardless of the circumstances you went through. Regarding the political system, it is unstable and, therefore, there are always new regulations. The above

> circumstances have pushed me unwillingly to behave according to the present situation" (LD6).

In terms of whether deans see themselves as managers/leaders or academics, the data clearly shows that they are both as they perform duties and responsibilities concerned with management, providing direction, and teaching. However, most of the leaders interviewed clarified that they identify themselves as being mainly managers/leaders as this is what they are primarily engaged in, despite their teaching and research responsibilities. Because of those residual activities, they do also consider themselves as academics. In fact, four of the participants admitted that although they are involved in a great volume of management activity, they still consider themselves as having academic identities which they do not want to lose, as noted by LD4, who said:

> "I always wanted to stay current in my field because most of my life I have been connected to education. This is part of my identity and I don't want to lose it. But at the same time, I cannot ignore my identity as a manager/leader" (LD4).

The above quotation emphasises the common desire among deans to retain their academic identity whilst in the role of dean, and to accept that at the same time they also have the manager/leader identity.

Interestingly, it is the balance of activity that causes feelings of unhappiness among deans. Some are happy with very little academic input to their roles, whilst others are very dissatisfied with that, and in this context, a new trend was identified by LD3, who expressed the view that in recent times, HE has lost some of its academic identity. Specifically, he referred to the fact that HE organisations have appointed lecturers from industry, and that these individuals have no idea about the culture of HEIs. Subsequently, they bring their strong industrial identity to the university and find it difficult to fit in with the values and ways of operation which do not mirror those in industry generally. In this connection, LD3 suggested a return to the original methods of appointing academics which required individuals who wished to work in HE to be appointed as a teaching assistant initially, and then to progress up the academic ladder. This belief was encapsulated in the comment:

> "I think HE organisations have somehow lost part of their identity since the Ministry of HE has started appointing lecturers from

> different sectors. Those people come to HE organisations with their previous identities which might be completely different from HE. I would propose lecturers have to be teaching assistants first" (LD3).

This comment does, of course, beg the question of whether people recruited to academic posts directly from industry can actually do any harm within the HE environment. Certainly, the push to improve graduate employment rates would seem to demand curricula that are informed by industry experts, and from which students can acquire industry-specific values and skills. Consequently, the recruitment of industrialists to academic positions may be a response to imperatives not to produce hordes of graduates who cannot gain work because they have not themselves embodied any workplace values during their HE. What does seem important, however, is that once recruited, such people should receive appropriate training in how to teach and should be assimilated into the HE organisational culture.

It also seems important to bear in mind that as the dean is supposed to be an academic leader that person must possess a certain level of knowledge and understanding, and expertise, in the subject area of the faculty, and therefore, the qualifications of the person appointed must be appropriate to lead staff who are genuine experts. This suggests there should be no sacrifice of academic credibility merely to acquire an individual with suitable industrial experience, or to return a favour to an important personal connection, or indeed to satisfy tribal expectations.

4.5 Summary

Summarising the data presented and analysed in this chapter, it can be seen that whilst there are similarities between the UK and Libyan data, there are also subtle, and some quite startling differences. In respect of the similarities, it is clear that the UK and Libyan deans all demonstrated passing through a formative period in which parental and extended family influence instilled the value of grasping all educational opportunities as a means of upward social mobility. One subtle difference, however, is that within the Libyan data the suggestion appears that such upward mobility would bring prestige to the wider family, and this seemed to be an important concept, in line with the observation (Hofstede, 1980) that Libya's society is characterised by collectivism in contrast to the individualistic nature of the UK national character.

Both sets of data also demonstrate that deans passed through a period of accession, whether that be an immediate move into teaching after their degree studies, work in industry prior to entering academia, or in the case of some Libyan deans, a much longer period of continuous academic study overseas which resulted in acquisition of much social prestige and the immediate appointment to a head of department role. Irrespective of how they arrived in academia, both UK and Libyan deans are seen via the data relating to their life and career histories, to have aspired to these positions because of their moral values and attitudes developed in their formative years.

However, in respect of the appointment to the role of dean, some obvious differences can be found, the first being the mechanism by which a dean obtains her/his position. The UK data clearly show that all deans competed for the post, implying their desire to become a dean, and that it was their expectation that they would be able to truly lead the direction of academic development. They have confidence in their leadership abilities. The Libyan data show something completely different, that being that deans are placed by higher authorities in the post, and not always on the basis of suitability for the role. Whilst no Libyan dean actually described himself as a puppet, remarks were made which suggested that having been appointed to a dean's post, pressure was brought to bear to behave in a certain way and achieve particular outcomes. The overwhelming feeling among Libyan deans was that they found themselves in an impossible, and therefore, stressful position, which attracted much interference from outsiders, and which they wished not to be in.

The UK deans also expressed difficulties in discharging their roles to the standard they personally wished, but the data reveals that in this scenario it was the role overload that caused the problem – too much management and insufficient time for research and academic leadership – rather than unco-operative staff, or expectations from outsiders to perform in a way that disagreed with their own educational values and mission. In the Libyan situation, the difficulties arise from the system of appointment just mentioned, the cultural predispositions of individuals within the institution and societal expectations which raise the interests of the tribe and extended family above those of organisational effectiveness, and the highly-charged political environment which still prevails and which promotes constant feelings of anxiety. Such feelings prevent deans from expressing their true feelings and they simply struggle on. Undoubtedly, the balance of activities in the role of dean in Libya is much skewed to management,

leaving little opportunity for any genuine academic leadership. Indeed, the system effectively appoints managers as none of the deans were expected to have any leadership experience.

Both the UK deans and the Libyan deans have developed their sense of professional identity over several years through further study, research, and latterly in the case of the Libyan deans, through joining professional bodies which were banned prior to the 2011 revolution. However, there is a level of frustration among them all in terms of their professional identity, i.e., what they want to perceive themselves as being, and what they actually do. That frustration is much less in evidence among the UK deans as they do experience greater freedom to lead their faculties, whereas the Libyan deans, eager to advance the curriculum find themselves dragged down by centralisation and bureaucracy as they operate mainly as managers and administrators.

The data also reveals that the strain of the dean's role acts to dampen motivation for other leadership positions further up the university hierarchy, and hence it can be seen that all deans are reaching or have reached, a period of disenchantment or divestiture. However, the length of time before those feelings began to occur was not indicated. That said, with the Libyan deans, even those with fairly short experience were struggling and it was clear from the data that they would not be seeking any other leadership roles.

Having analysed the data using life history, cultural, and figured worlds theory, it is now appropriate to discuss the outcomes, and this is done in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the previous chapter in which the data obtained during the empirical fieldwork was analysed according to the four-dimensional theoretical framework developed earlier in the thesis, that being: leadership stages, life history, national culture, and professional identity through the mechanism of figured worlds. Having presented that data, it is now important to discuss what it means and to do so with reference to ideas already expressed in the literature, so that the behaviour of the two sets of senior leaders can be understood in a comprehensive way. Additionally, where there is no associated commentary in the literature, this will indicate where new explanations are needed. The chapter follows the format of addressing each of the two research questions in turn and of presenting both sets of data (the UK and Libyan data) together rather than discussing the two fields separately. Simultaneous discussion allows for comparisons to be made between the two research samples. It should be noted, however, that when referring to UK participants the pronouns used are non-gender specific as there are both female and male deans and to be specific in terms of gender may remove anonymity. The Libyan deans on the other hand, are all male, and consequently, gender-specific pronouns are used.

Given this chapter structure, Section 5.2 focuses on Research Question 1: How does life history affect academic leadership? This is divided into two sub-sections to cover the participants' formative years (5.2.1), and career and leadership roles (5.2.2). Section 5.3 addresses Research Question 2: What shapes the professional identity of senior academic leaders? Section 5.4 then presents a comparison of the data with the intention of highlighting the essential differences between the UK and Libyan deans, and finally Section 5.5 draws a conclusion to the chapter.

5.2 Discussion of Research Question 1: How does life history affect academic leadership?

In asking this question of the participants, the intention was to encourage them to reflect on their personal situations, to provide insights into their own unique development, and to try to establish whether in fact, they were able to identify certain aspects of their life

histories which had steered them into their eventual roles as senior leaders. It was also hoped that in their identification of critical points in their life histories, they might also recognise how the incidents involved had helped to shape not just their ambitions to become leaders in some way, but to foster their leadership potential, and guide them into the particular styles they adopted. Undoubtedly in this act of reflection, the deans would trace, and potentially re-construct aspects of their life histories to avoid dissonant memories and/or events that are not congruent with their current positions as leaders in academic institutions. Hence, it is accepted that not all experience which may be relevant may be divulged. Indeed, it may not even be remembered. However, as suggested by Inman (2011), the purpose of reflection upon life history is to seek enlightenment, and that implies the legitimacy of re-creating history with the benefit of such insight gained after events.

Nonetheless, it is necessary to acquire a story, regardless of whether this may change with time, and hence, it is appropriate to present the discussion in chronological form, starting from early memories of life within the family unit, proceeding through the early stages of leadership development and career exposure, and continuing to the current post. The story of each senior leader's journey to deanship, and indeed the stage at which they felt they were in at the time of the interviews was interpreted through the very similar theories of leadership stages conceptualised by Gronn (1999), Day and Bakioglu (1996), Ribbins (2003), and Inman (2007).

5.2.1 Formative Years

Gronn (1999) believes that leaders go through times in their lives which are formative in some way, and Ribbins (2003) accepts this notion, building it in his model of leadership stages. In fact, the participants in this study, both from the UK and Libya, seemed to appreciate their own journeys in this respect, as they all drew on their social backgrounds, cultural models, and values from their early upbringing, which helped to form their ideas and attitudes towards others and society at large. What is clearly evident from the two sets of data is that the initial parental encouragement was critical for all the individuals in the present study, irrespective of whether they grew up in the UK or Libya, and of whether their parents had received formal education. This is not a surprising revelation as both Gronn (1999) and Parker (2002) place parents in the position of role models in this respect, and confirm that it is their influence that helps leaders in the shaping and "scaffolding of a character structure" (Gronn, 1999:32-33).

However, specifically when reflecting on the leadership foundation for academics who aspire to leadership positions, it is argued by Inman (2011), that the 'formation' stage identified by Gronn (1999) and Ribbins (2003) as being the early socialisation within the family, can definitely be seen to constitute the important underpinning. Certainly, in Inman's study, the participants grew up in supportive and encouraging families, despite it not being usual for those families to have had any formal education. And although, arguably, they could have gone into a different job direction, the parallel between Inman's results and those in the current study from both fields is noticeable. For example, five UK participants quite clearly recalled their early memories of being at school and wanting to do well, of appreciating education as an activity despite the fact that their parents had left school at the age of 14. The outcome was that they realised their school ambitions, all progressing into post-compulsory education. Likewise, from encouragement to value school, and the subsequent successes achieved, and irrespective of the fact that their parents had not been educated at all, five of the Libyan participants were able to eventually obtain government scholarships to study abroad. And in fact, three of the Libyan interviewees were given scholarships to enable them to study for a BA, MA, and PhD concurrently. This lengthy journey from parental encouragement and ambition for their children, to their children's educational progression to a high academic level does in itself constitute a long ongoing formative period in their career aspirations, being instrumental in "developing moral values and attributes" (Parker, 2002:10). Moreover, it functioned as a process by which leadership abilities could be determined (Ribbins, 2003) and trialled.

The parental push for their children to do well either in education or in life, and to instil within them certain aspirations, can also be interpreted from a cultural perspective, whereby in some societies, upward mobility is desired by parents for their children's individual advancement, whilst in others the desire to bring kudos to the family serves as an important motivator. In this respect, Hofstede's (1980) dimension relating to Individualism/Collectivism is useful as a way of explaining this, since it "describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity that prevails in a given society" (Hofstede, 2001:209). And the cultural differences between the UK and Libya become evident in this respect, since the UK data seems to demonstrate a parental desire for the children to do well for themselves, thereby resonating with the belief expressed by

Harzing and Van Ruyssevelt (1995), that people in individualistic cultures take responsibility for themselves, and their own well-being.

The Libyan data, on the other hand, whilst also reflecting a parental belief that education was the means of securing their children's futures from an economic viewpoint, also emphasised the social advantages it would bring. Such social benefits spring from the fact that in Libya, educated individuals enjoy great respect within society, and this reflects upon their families and tribes, bringing more prestige for those collectives. LD5's reference to educated people being "more respected" is a comment on the importance of status in Libyan society, and the transfer of such status to the family and tribe is reflective of the collectivism that prevails in Libya. The point is made by Hofstede (1980) that individual prestige gained through educational achievement becomes the basis for family prestige, and eventually for increased prestige and power for the tribe. And with such enhanced prestige, individuals can legitimately distance themselves from those in the lower echelons of society, reflecting another mechanism by which power distance may be observed.

It can be understood, therefore, that for all Libyan deans, the driving force to make the most of educational opportunities (which would in themselves provide the vehicle for upward social mobility and potentially leadership in some form or other), was the family. And it can also be argued that it was the levels of poverty which spurred their parents into taking on such an influential role in the formative years of their children, when ideas about self-improvement were instilled within them. This understanding and personal experience of poverty and hardship formed part of the life history of all Libyan deans, and in analysing their motivation to become educated it does become apparent that this was valuable self-knowledge as history-in-person (Holland et al., 1998). Indeed, Traffinder (1995) documents the value of life history in this respect.

The indications of a more individualistic culture in the UK can be seen in the gradual changes in social history, from Victorian times when the family was the centre of life, to the modern era (after the Great War) and the postmodern period (after WWII), when individuals had been exposed to long years of war and had become more aware of their mortality (Marquand, 2004). Over that half century the extended family structure that had once dominated the social structure began to crumble as families were broken with war, and against that background, the desire for personal achievement and advancement

brought with it the idea of the nuclear family (ibid). Consequently, the parental respect for education in the UK was not the result of a desire to profit socially from their children's educational success.

Nonetheless, despite the differences between the parental motives for encouraging their children to strive to achieve educationally, the parents of both the UK and Libyan deans were undoubtedly examining their own social world and conveying the need to do this to their children (Holland et al., 1998). This social exploration prompted the participants to examine the world around them, determine where they wanted to be in relation to others, and subsequently to be attracted to leadership roles. This natural acceptance may have been the result of the early and unconscious absorption of the values underpinning the desire to make the best out of educational opportunities. Given that all participants were at an impressionable age when they were socialised into worlds where these values were prominent, it is probable that these attitudes were so embedded that they have remained part of their overall value system to the present day. Indeed, Holland et al. (1998) argue that the social learning in which individuals are involved, develops not only their cognitive abilities, but also predisposes them to 'figure' how they fit into the complexities of the life worlds in which they operate, such that they find their place both in their immediate sociocultural world, and in the wider societal and cultural setting. Such embedding is evident in one of the UK participant's views of education which stemmed from the fact that her/his father had risen up the ranks from being a tradesman, undergoing technical teacher training, and eventually becoming a Further Education lecturer. This family history had served to reinforce the participant's attitudes towards education as positive, as was clear when s/he said: "That, I think, was passed on to me as a child growing up - the value of education, the importance of education" (UKD6). This observation is echoed in the literature by Creaby (2016), who notes that the social world inhabited by individuals becomes the mechanism by which those people can be 'something', and develop even further.

Likewise, one of the Libyan participants recalled the specific instance of when he had been assigned some minor leadership tasks within his family, and later in organisations of which he had become a member. Collectively, this exposure to leadership had given him certain responsibilities and some difficult tasks to execute, at the same time as having to show his ability in directing others, generally performing well, and securing good outcomes. These were the experiences that allowed him to develop a self-image as

an individual with leadership ability, since the opportunities contained within these various roles provided him with the means of exploring this potential. Describing his early experience, this interviewee said:

> "My father pushed me to be responsible for the family when I was young … I joined the Scout Association when I was young. I also joined the Student Union and it really did help in enriching my knowledge on leadership, and I had some leadership positions in this unit. These organisations taught me how to lead and to be led" (LD3).

In fact, what can be seen from this comment is that LD3 was 'directed' to adopt a leadership role within the family from a very early age, and to progress to leadership outside the family whilst also young. These can be seen as formative experiences. However, his advancement into leadership within the Student Union, whilst also formative, can be interpreted as placing him in the Accession stage as identified by Gronn (1999) (and discussed in more detail later), since that provided him with different experiences, which he recognised as developmental in teaching him "how to lead and to be led". Moreover, as Gronn also notes (1999), the accession stage is a period of grooming, and if the individual is enticed by his/her experiences in this phase, then s/he may actively search for jobs that allow the new skills of leadership to be used and developed.

Clearly, the link between where the study participants came from and their early life experiences was voiced as history-in-person, from which it is obvious that cultural influences and societal notions of positioning served as key influencers on how they conceived of leadership. These cultural influences and societal traditions had been fully appreciated by the participants' parents as they figured out their own worlds and what they wanted for their children, and as cultural transmission, the values they conveyed concerned with personal and family betterment, meant that as the children grew into adulthood they too figured their own worlds.

5.2.2 Career and Leadership Roles

In relating their life histories and focusing upon their early careers, both the UK and Libyan participants referred to various experiences of being led/managed, and how these had been influential in their own development and in creating within them, the self-image of an academic, and indeed leader. These experiences were, therefore, considered to have determined some of the decisions they made concerning how to lead.

Specifically, they spoke of coming to appreciate the value of being flexible, becoming able to modify their thinking, and to adopt behavioural styles to suit the situation. And they were clearly able to identify that certain role models had been the reason for leading their departments as they did. Many recollections in this respect were recognisable as falling in line with the observations made by Pepper and Giles (2015), Inman (2007), and Dimmock and O'Donoghue (1997) to the effect that certain life experiences are accredited, filtered, and then capitalised upon by leaders as they develop their own good practice, and reject what they perceive as bad. Indeed, in the data from both research groups, several participants indicated that they had themselves had experience of poor leaders, and this had affected the way in which they approached the business of leading others. In contrast, others had experience of good line managers and had tried to emulate their styles of leadership, using them as role models for their own behaviour. For instance, one participant said: "I have seen leaders behave badly, unfairly, angrily ... I saw something bad and tried to avoid it" (UKD6). And as mentioned earlier, LD3 referred to his experience of leadership in the family, Scout Organisation, and Student Union, stating that his varied opportunities in those contexts had been influential in teaching him how to lead.

Such types of influence can be interpreted as critical events, incidents, turning points, defining moments, and trigger events (Gronn, 1999; Parker, 2002; Luthans and Avolio, 2002), and considered as antecedents of leadership development. Hence, it can be understood that the way in which a leader operates is dependent upon all the experiences s/he has gained in his/her past (Dimmock and O'Donoghue, 1997; Spillane et al., 2001). When the participants told their stories, they tried to make sense of themselves by reference to the set of meanings around them that had gradually been derived from history and practice (Clammer et al., 2004); and accordingly, which seemed to help them make informed decisions.

This early career stage, referred to by Gronn (1999), Ribbins (2003) and Inman (2007) as Accession, is that period when individuals search for experience and leadership roles. However, the data from the present study suggests that the 'searching' aspect of that stage was largely missing, especially in the UK data, since it appeared that senior leaders in the UK had either consciously or unconsciously, gained leadership experience during their early careers, almost as a by-product of their particular circumstances rather than as the result of any deliberate search for it. For example, one participant said:

> "I gradually went from associate lecturer to a full-time lecturer, to senior lecturer, to principal lecturer, to head of department, and at no point in that journey, honestly, did I think that I would like to be the dean. I have been an accidental manager" (UKD2).

Likewise, in the Libyan data, there was evidence that the Accession stage did not occur in most cases, as three leaders were appointed to their posts irrespective of the fact that these jobs in HE were actually their first jobs after finishing their long educational journey overseas. In this case, it was clear that despite possessing many educational qualifications, on accession to the role of dean, the participants were not prepared for leadership and were still actually in their formative positions in as much as acquiring leadership values was concerned. Also of interest, was the admission from one interviewee that he was appointed directly as a dean despite never having held any leadership position whatsoever throughout his life. Hence, it can be argued that experience, whether planned or accidental, plays no part in the rise to leadership positions in Libyan HE, a circumstance that sits in tension with the view of Gronn (1999), Ribbins (2003), and Inman 2007. Indeed, Tamtam et al. (2011) have suggested that there are no criteria in place for the selection of individuals for leadership roles in Libyan HE. Consequently, the question of how individuals find themselves in such powerful positions in this context is an interesting, and important one. And in this respect, it is the life history of the participants which provides the answer, yet this must be viewed in the cultural context of where that history unfolds, and a discussion of this appears later in the chapter.

However, having discussed the life history of the senior leaders involved, and how they have reached their current role, it is apparent that whilst they generally claimed to have reached their positions by accident, and not to have nurtured any prior aspirations to become deans, none of the participants said they did not enjoy the job, although they had reservations about certain aspects of it. And in fact, the situation with the UK deans was that, they had all participated in the application process and had competed with others for their posts. This may be interpreted as a reflection of the individualistic nature of UK and Western society in general, as revealed in Hofstede's large IBM study (1980), which despite its criticisms from some scholars, nevertheless remains as the largest global study of national culture conducted to date. Clearly, in the situation of the UK deans, there was no element of force from top management or other societal

interference, and this suggests a proactivity on their part, and that they were all psychologically attuned with the notion of becoming an academic leader at that level. Indeed, they did all express sufficient belief in their leadership abilities to be able to persuade staff to follow their lead, and achieve something within their faculties that coincided with their values.

Consequently, it can be argued that their life histories had encouraged them to 'figure their worlds' (Holland et al., 1998; Urrieta, 2007) and to actively search out leadership positions in education on the grounds that these would be perceived as empowering, and, as suggested by Floyd (2012:282), help them "to exert more control over their professional and organizational socialization, which, in turn, would allow more harmony with their professional and personal identities".

In contrast with the UK appointment system, however, the route to deanship in Libya does not operate on the basis of open competition, as evidenced by the participants who described the process as one in which decisions are made to place a particular individual in the role of dean, by others both inside and outside the HEIs. Often those 'others' come from government agencies - and there is no guarantee that the chosen individual either wishes to be in that position or is capable of discharging the associated duties. Also, when such decisions are made, appointees are often coerced into accepting them without question, as indicated by LD1 who said "I was encouraged by the society to accept it". This expectation by society, was repeatedly mentioned in the data, suggesting society was capable of bringing much pressure to bear on individuals to behave in what society perceived to be 'the common interest'.

Clearly, Libyan society does play a significant role in steering Libyan individuals into particular jobs and career directions, and in doing this it is obvious that certain powerful people in that society use their influence erroneously as they can foster the advancement of a person without having any knowledge themselves of whether that individual is qualified, likely to do a good job, or indeed without even caring about such matters. These are reflections of a national culture in which both Collectivism and Power Distance as cultural constructs are important, as indicated by Hofstede (1980) in his cultural theory. They can be interpreted through the lens of collectivism which predisposes expectations by society that individuals behave in the interests of the wider group to which they belong, and through that of high power distance which legitimises

inequalities in the social order. Therefore, certain appointments and promotions in the workplace are made on the basis of favouritism and nepotism as opposed to merit (showing high power distance), and individuals, even if they do not want these appointments, are obliged to accept them as a means of strengthening extended family or tribal prestige (collectivism). This is a well-known common practice in Libya, but it does nonetheless, result in talented people switching-off, and less capable people being elevated to positions of responsibility and leadership without any qualification to occupy those roles. The practice works to guarantee that only people from the same area or town where the organisation is located are promoted, in the belief that their local pedigree makes them a better choice for the organisation and for the town, than someone coming from another area. And this point is reflected in the words of one participant (LD3) who said that he was the only local lecturer in his department (and subsequently became dean).

That situation could undoubtedly be problematic for a dean, since subordinates from a different area (tribe) often feel little allegiance to their superior, and can make the act of task delegation impossible. At the same time, however, the high score on uncertainty avoidance recorded in Libya (Hofstede, 1980) seems to confirm that the cultural disposition is to shy away from taking the initiative and to expect to work in a highly rule-governed environment, such that essentially there is no room for misinterpretation, errors, and eventual blame. Hence, there is a problem – Libyans require clear direction (uncertainty avoidance), yet may refuse to accept this from another who is not part of their collective (collectivism).

Nonetheless, the system prevails, and under the centralised bureaucratic systems existing in all Libyan universities, the influence of tribalism operates to control appointments, whether for the better or otherwise. Certainly, the researcher can confirm that it is usual for HE institutions situated outside the big cities and where there are large tribes, to recruit entirely from the locality and from the tribes which are already influential within those institutions. Furthermore, the regulations regarding appointment to the post of dean stipulate that only Libyan citizens are eligible, and in fact, during the Qadafi period, only those who claimed strong allegiance to the Qadafi political philosophy were appointed. The criterion for appointment was just that, regardless of whether appointees possessed the skills, abilities, and qualifications to assume such positions, (Sudworth, 2011), and hence it can be understood that educational

organisations were, and continue to be politicised establishments. Of course, whether those deans did in reality, internalise Qadafi's political philosophy is a different question, because as documented by history, some such leaders openly criticised the system but were quickly brought into line by the political powers.

Certainly, however, the wish to progress within society, to enjoy prestige and the material wealth which comes with it, is fostered by tribal values, and from the researcher's own experience as a dean, it is clear that the material perks of the job are a consideration. None of the Libyan participants actually referred to these, but deans are provided with transport (a car), laptops, mobile phones, credits, etc. and in a relatively poor society, these outward manifestations of prestige are worth having. Consequently, the chance of an individual accepting a job for which s/he is not qualified and says s/he does not really want, is increased.

This echoes Hofstede's dimension Power Distance which reflects the extent to which members of a society accept social inequality which "can occur in areas such as prestige, wealth, and power" and "is usually formalized in boss-subordinate relationships" Hofstede (2001:79). As indicated earlier, Hofstede found Libya to have scored highly on Power Distance, indicating a very high level of acceptance of societal inequality, and therefore, one would expect compliance with instructions from those further up the hierarchy. For instance, it was mentioned in the data that staff consider deans to be powerful and believe they are responsible for formulating university regulations as indicated by LD5 who said staff "sometimes think that deans can even pass a law". It is perhaps not too surprising that some of those lower down the university hierarchy are ignorant of the detail of the dean's role, since the predisposition to power distance highlighted by Hofstede (1980) would suggest that hierarchical levels keep themselves very much to themselves, imposing a distance between them and the next tier of management. Consequently, the ideas they possess about what those further up the organisational pyramid actually do, are not usually the result of direct communication with their managers, but rather come from supposition.

Moreover, in the specific position of dean, where there are opportunities to travel to conferences, and to forge academic links elsewhere, the potential for networking and increasing one's existing range of personal connections is massive. In a country where life is uncertain, such connections are important and can guarantee the well-being of family. Indeed, "uncertainty about the future is a basic fact of human life" (Hofstede,

2001:145). In high uncertainty avoidance societies (such as Libya as indicated by Hofstede) individuals are socialised to adhere to regulations to achieve a result in the short term, rather than to anticipate events in the future.

It is important to acknowledge at this point that Islam, which is a centuries-long dimension of the Libyan culture, predisposes individuals to place trust in God (Allah) for the future, and even in modern society, that tendency prevails, which explains why people do not prioritise strategic decision-making to the same extent as is seen in more secular societies. Consequently, Libyan deans do not perceive themselves as long-term strategists; rather, their concern is with solving immediate problems in order to avoid blame and lose face. However, in behaving in such manner, they do not attribute their tendency not to look to the future as a cultural trait emanating from religion, which is part of their life history from which they cannot be divided, but seek to explain it as a result of the bureaucratic system.

This was clear in the findings as some leaders described themselves as 'fire-fighters' dealing with problems as and when they arose, usually on a day-to-day basis. A problem which was mentioned repeatedly in the Libyan findings is how bureaucratic higher education organisations are; this is also indicated in the literature by Al-howat (1996) as a characteristic in the management system in Higher Education. The Libyan participants seemed to be used to coping with this situation which has become part of their history and this reflects the argument by Hofstede (1980:146) that the "ways of coping with uncertainty belong to the cultural heritages of societies, and … are transferred and reinforced through basic institutions such as the family, the school, and the state". Religion is one such basic institution, which is used in many societies as a crutch for people to lean on in the face of uncertainty. In the case of Libya, Islam plays its part, not least in directing individuals to be sociable and to offer their hand in help to others. Certainly, the majority of the Libyan participants mentioned the same way of dealing with this issue. In fact, five of the interviewees stated the need for deans to enjoy good social connections since these are required to lead their faculties effectively. They believed that it was important to be sociable, again referring to the tribal character of Libyan society, such that they could perform favours for others that could subsequently be called in when solutions to their problems were necessary. Such behaviour, whilst distasteful to societies that consider themselves to be based on notions of merit and transparency, irrespective of whether those beliefs are actually true, is both

customary and expected, having no stigma attached to it. LD2 confirmed this saying it had become "unwritten law", and that more senior leaders actually advocated that deans capitalise upon their social connections to improve the resources in their faculties, since the universities themselves are not known for providing the resources required to underpin all the educational efforts of the staff themselves.

Regardless, however, of how the participants in both the UK and Libya claimed to have found themselves in their deans' positions, they did recognise that they had acquired different skills from different sources, and that this range of skill development and experience had helped them to specify who they wanted to be. This stage is referred to by Gronn (1999), Ribbins (2003), and Inman (2007) as Incumbency where leaders reach this stage with some good experience which supposedly propels them on the path to self-actualisation. This concurs with the findings from the UK data, as in many instances, the leaders interviewed mentioned that they were considered the backbone of the organisation and worth listening to by people in their faculties, and by some more senior leaders. This seems to some extent, a logical outcome since those leaders reached these places after great experience and contributions, and some even had some general training regarding management and leadership as they might have been seen as having potential characteristics of leaders by more senior managers/leaders. However, the Libyan data displays no such stage in the trajectory followed by Libyan deans, as half of them had had no genuine leadership experience whatsoever. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the Incumbency stage, as characterised by Gronn (1999:38) is not always evident in the Libyan scenario, since his description of this time is one that is reached when leaders have advanced their communication skills and "learned to project their authoritativeness", which was clearly not the case as presented by those deans.

In this situation, it would be better, as suggested by Day and Bakioglu (1996), to describe the reality for some individuals as the Initiation stage, which Inman (2007) considers as a sub-stage of Incumbency. Day and Bakioglu (1996) mention that this stage is classified into two important processes, these being learning on the job, and working within an existing organisation's frame and structure, and that the stage can be easy or difficult depending upon the organisational circumstances. This concurs with what was expressed by some of the Libyan leaders since their experience only began when embarking upon their deanships, whereas all the UK deans had had some leadership experience in a more junior capacity either within the university or in

industry. Indeed, in respect of the Libyan deans, it has already been noted that some confessed to having struggled as a result of appointment immediately after completing their education overseas, and of being uncertain of how to manage even simple problems/issues. For example, one participant said: "I remember in my first year as a dean I always hesitated even when signing up final results" (LD1). The uncertainty experienced by these Libyan participants reflects the observations by Day and Bakioglu (1996), that uncertainty is a sub-phase within the overall Initiation stage.

Within the context of why leaders had accepted their role as dean, there was a common motive expressed by both research groups, this involving the desire to make a 'significant contribution' and a 'significant difference', suggesting they perceived their leadership to enable them to function as change agents. Such observations fit neatly into the stage of Autonomy (Day and Bakioglu, 1996) as it is clear that deans see themselves as having the power and academic freedom to steer their faculties in a direction which they choose, and which is for the best. These were recurring themes for some of those leaders (especially the UK ones) as they had become experts in their fields and felt they could be valuable in other contexts. Again, this reflects their moral values acquired during their life histories (Parker, 2002; Briggs 2007). One of the UK leaders considered this possibility, referring to a potential sideways move which would be equally valuable to the university and equally rewarding to him. However, whether deans could genuinely make a difference or whether this might remain an unfulfilled wish, and whether any difference made would be one which they themselves want to make or one which top managers/leaders want them to make, is another issue.

The reflections by participants on the wish to make a significant contribution or difference, or to usher in change for the good of their faculties, coincides with the observation made by Inman (2011:237) who states that "making a difference is a recurring theme", but who continues that whilst that certainly features prominently in the feelings expressed by deans, "the excitement of the research and what it is hoping to achieve appears to be the overriding theme, irrespective of being a leader of a faculty". Hence, Inman (2011) supports Ribbins' (2003) contention that whilst a fourth stage is required, this is not necessarily one of 'disenchantment' because despite leaders not being interested in progressing further up the career ladder, fearing such progressions might take them away from their interests, they nonetheless express their desire to continue doing what they have previously enjoyed, and this clearly has nothing to do

with disillusionment. Inman (2011:238), therefore, suggests 'reclamation' as an appropriate name for this stage for leaders in HE "because it describes a situation where leaders reclaim previous work and interests to re-focus their energy on these". This idea of reclamation could well apply to most of the UK participants in this study, since they have definitely become experts in their fields, and harbour a preference to be more subject-focused and to divest themselves of managerial and administrative tasks which are seen to interfere with this preference. It suggests also the need to return to a happier, more pleasurable period in their lives, when there was much less tension between the need to involve in administration, and the self-actualisation experienced from being a good teacher served as a comforting emotion that was not damaged by feelings of excessive workload. The emotions expressed by those who hinted at a wish to do something different, could be considered as nostalgic, and borne out of the experience of a point in their careers when there was more job satisfaction – the outcome of a closer relationship with the subject.

The Libyan leaders, however, seem to have experienced different stages. It was clear in the data that three leaders had become experts and did not want to throw this management/leadership experience away. These individuals were obviously experiencing positive feelings towards what they were doing and reaching a stage that Ribbins (2003) calls Enchantment. Others, on the other hand, explained that they had reached a point, as discussed by Day and Bakioglu (1996), where certain factors such as heavy workloads, illness, getting older, and lack of motivation, pushed them to a stage where there was "no actual development" (ibid:219). Indeed, some leaders did include age and heavy workload as reasons for not accepting leadership roles further up the hierarchy or even continuing in their current position for long. This stage is described by Ribbins (2003) as Disenchantment where leaders experience negative feelings. However, two leaders were approaching retirement happily and that was because they wanted to do other things in life. One for example, mentioned that the time had come to spend more time with grandchildren and be closer to Allah by practising his religion as it should be. Thus, the experience of either Disenchantment or Enchantment will shape the last stage of Incumbency for those leaders.

Given that the above discussion has shown that the leaders in question have gone through different stages and experienced different experiences, it is reasonable to ask whether they adopted any particular leadership style, and more importantly, what made

them choose this style. Although leadership style is a broad and complex aspect, some different leadership styles were articulated by both sets of deans as 'collegial', 'loose', 'democratic', 'autocratic', flexible and firm, and 'dictatorship'. However, what was apparent in all responses was that the culture of the participants played an important role in the leadership style. In some instances in both data fields, it was clear that followers played a major role in urging the leaders to choose certain types of style.

For instance, it was mentioned in the UK data that what is entailed in leading people differs from one sector to another, that people themselves differ, and that academics in some departments are very specific and creative people, and that leaders must appreciate their mentality and psyche in order to work well with them. Hence, the behaviour of academics is influential in the type of leadership style employed by a dean. Academics, arguably, come to higher education with certain values and beliefs and they expect to find a level of harmony with their leaders despite the fact that they may vary in the intricacies of their belief systems. In such a scenario, the leaders' behaviour would determine the followers' perceptions, be they positive or negative, towards them, thus reflecting the 'figured worlds' perspective proposed by Holland et al. (1998), but which was spoken of in different terms as long ago as 1902 with Cooley's conceptualisation of the 'looking-glass self', and later expanded by Mead (1934) with his theory of self. These ideas recognise the absoluteness of human interaction in given contexts as determining the self-image which individuals develop, by positioning themselves and responding in relation to what others convey to them in terms of their expectations and acceptance of their behaviour.

In the Libyan sample, people (especially academics) are described as "warm-blooded people, who do not like being forced to do things even their jobs, which is why deans have to be wise and diplomatic" (LD2). This problem has already been mentioned in the context of deans finding it hard to delegate, and attributed to the tribal and extended family society that characterises Libya. Individuals who have aspired to the leadership roles by virtue of the influence of family members and tribesmen consider themselves as being protected from the rules and regulations of the institution, and essentially they ignore them, leaving deans with the unhappy task of trying to convince them that the university rules take precedence over other considerations, and should be complied with.

Inevitably, the 'worlds' of the organisations in both the UK and Libya are interwoven with cultural expectations and social positioning which often lead to a questioning of the leaders' values. These expectations derived from culture and social positioning did, in some cases, cause problems for leaders, since it was apparent to them what they 'ought' to do yet in reality they might be acting differently. This was indicated by discrepancies between what some leaders said they did, and what they actually did. For instance, in the UK data, although the leadership styles claimed by the interviewees suggest they promote a democratic atmosphere within their faculties, it did emerge that some participants were quite sure of the outcomes they wanted to achieve before they even debated issues with colleagues, and that during the process of discussion, they operated to persuade people to accept those outcomes. In such a scenario, it is always possible that followers remain unaffected by their leaders' behaviour, and that despite being given instruction or encouragement, they fail to listen, or they listen but ignore the request. This prompts the very important question of how effective particular leadership styles are, which is not a matter for this thesis, but nonetheless, in arriving at ideas of what constitutes effective leadership, it is appropriate to consider what promotes the identity as professionals - as leaders in an academic environment – among the study's participants, and this is the focus of Research Question 2.

5.3 Discussion of Research Question 2: What shapes the professional identity of senior academic leaders?

There is a consensus in the literature that professional identity is not stable. Rather it is seen as an ongoing process in which the individual continually interprets and reinterprets the experiences gained while discharging the professional roles associated with any given context. There is no sense in which professional identity can be understood as a fixed attribute, but it is true to say that the self-images held by the study participants were gained directly from their environment, and this implies a heavy influence of culture; and as has been shown so far, culture does have fixed attributes in relation to attitudes towards power, which is inextricably linked with leadership, and hence the professional identify of the participants. The point has been made by Mortimer and Simmons (1978) that individuals do not accumulate their identities in a vacuum, but do so rather as members of groups which function to transmit certain beliefs, values, and behavioural norms, all of which support growing predispositions to lead or follow. In the case of this study's participants, the groups in question were both

formal and informal, with the former accounting for those in the work environment (including managers, supervisors, colleagues, and trainers), and the latter embracing family and society. Socialisation takes place in both formal and informal groups, and within those individuals' construction of reality occurs and is reflected back to them (Wentworth, 1980).

It is argued that potential leaders make interpretations of their past experiences, heightening certain of these and downplaying others as they construct their own identity. The early life experiences of the participants played an important role in constructing their professional identities as their life history-in-person constructed over time (Holland et al, 1998). As indicated in the first research question, the expectations placed upon young individuals by both family and culture contribute towards the identities that such individuals generate for themselves (Turner, 1994), and the strong influence wielded by parents and society is responsible for the creation of a mindset that values education and knowledge right from early childhood (Floyd, 2012). The Libyan dean (LD3) who mentioned his exposure to leadership in early life through family roles, and experience in the Boy Scouts, clearly acknowledged what had been gained during this period in terms of constructing his leadership identity, since it was at this stage that his own self-image as someone with leadership ability emerged. These early life experiences among all participants seem to have formed part of their cultural inheritance (Holland et al, 1998), were strongly remembered in their different life-worlds, and indeed when they told their stories. UKD3 for instance, referred to her/his own Scottish heritage as being influential in this respect, believing the Scottish culture to promote education. On this issue s/he said: "I think the Scottish culture really values education". This reflects the views expressed by Hofstede (1980) in respect of how cultures favour, and indeed prioritise certain values over others, and ensure that those values that are strongly upheld are consolidated by transmission to children via their early socialisation within the family. It was most evident from the stories told by the deans from both the UK and Libyan samples, that their upbringings had instilled deeply-ingrained attitudes within them, and that these ideas had stayed with them, subsequently strengthening their sense of self and where they fitted in the worlds they lived in, and simultaneously, moulding their identities.

The participants' stories during their career stages in different life-worlds and organisations were used by them in a reflective way to self-author their professional

identities, which in themselves embodied ideas relating to their innate abilities as academic leaders and managers. Their recollections of specific experiences demonstrated that these stood in their memories of important and critical incidents, turning points in their lives where choices could be made about how to react and where decisions were taken on the basis of the meanings and significance they attached to the actual events they related. These meanings were fundamental to their construction of their professional identity, positioning the participants as individuals with leadership potential and ability among others without that capability. Their journeys as described in their career stages were undoubtedly developmental, as was seen in the comments by UKD6 who referred to an early job environment as one in which there was no option but to either "sink-or-swim". UKD6 considered this time in his/her life was one that emphasised the need to be flexible and to search for solutions, and as one that enabled him/her to develop the skills required to become a good researcher. This represented a critical point in UKD6's early career, providing the motivation to capitalise upon the skills that had in a way, been forced to develop, and pursue a road into academic leadership. It is possible to consider UKD6's professional image as being the result of the different experience gathered by operating in different social worlds, as s/he indicating having "spent 12 years moving from one contract to another". This 'travelling' in and out of different worlds provided the foundation for UKD6 to construct her/his eventual professional identity (Holland et al., 1998). The same observation can also be made in respect of those deans who had entered academia with some industrial experience, whether as employees or freelancers, since it was clear from their stories, that these periods were hugely instrumental in contributing to their professional identity. UKD4, for example, believed that her/his experience in industry was something which s/he saw as an advantage, and of which s/he was proud, as it meant s/he had much more to bring to the current situation. S/he also quite clearly understood that her/his identity had changed with the move from industry to education, as the comment "I am quite proud of my background in industry. I can bring two different identities to create a certain new one" emphasises her/his appreciation of a new outlook and self-image.

This appreciation was also expressed by LD6 who, having gained an identity as an industrialist, then moved into academia which he believed added to his original self-image to produce a holistic identity that he felt gave him all-round expertise. He stated having had a "great experience working in industry" and that his identity at that time

could not be ignored.

Both UKD4, who said "I can bring two different identities", and LD6, who said "I cannot ignore my previous identity", can be seen as 'figuring' their positions in the different worlds they had inhabited; and from this it can be understood that their career moves into HE provided the context for a different identity to emerge and be shaped (Gee, 2000: Holland et al., 1998). These deans acknowledged that the two social worlds of industry and academia had endowed them with different professional identities, and their appreciation of their years spent in industry in their early careers indicates that the experience gained from that time had equipped them with knowledge and skills that could be built upon in the university environment. This is what Holland et al. (1998:5) referred to as "finding their place" and "determining who they are" – in other words, as constructing their composite identity, a situation reached as a result of social development that "combines the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations" (Holland et al., 1998:5). In making those combinations, whether consciously or otherwise, individuals are of course, implicitly guided by the cultural forms presiding in those worlds, and it can thus be expected that values relating to the organisation of power, rank, and status will impinge upon the negotiation of the professional image finally derived. Given the greater importance of status in Libyan society than in UK society, shown in the differential in the Power Distance scores obtained by Hofstede (1980), it might be assumed that a Libyan dean's professional identity could be enhanced by the addition of different career experience, but this idea was not developed in this study.

Throughout the stories told by interviewees, motifs concerning cultural dispositions, organisational ways of working, and leadership preparation and training served as undercurrents to signal vital influences upon how leaders gain their positions, what they do when in them, and how they develop their identity as professionals who are supposed to lead others in the right academic direction. And during their narrations there were important movements back and forth in terms of the experiences acquired over time and how these had helped in their current practice. In the UK sample, four of the participants made positive comments about the importance of the training they had undergone, and the relevance of this to what they were doing and shaping their identities. This experience, according to UK1, "contributes to who you are" and "contributes to the position I am in at the moment because it builds a certain sense of

style and character in the way you do things". The professional identity of deans was seen to be enhanced by training, especially where peers from the same and other organisations were present, since this brought them substantial opportunities for general networking in which they, as professionals, had the chance to interact, discuss, and share experience. Knowledge of the strategies other senior leaders adopt, and how to lead better themselves, enhanced their actual ability to lead and simultaneously, their self-perception as professionals, as well as the perception of others towards them. Again, a clear example of deans figuring their place in relation to others in their social realm is evident (Holland et al., 1998).

In the Libyan sample, the professional identity was not, however, facilitated by any kind of organised preparation for leadership in the role of dean, within the universities involved. Two participants had been offered training but not until they had actually been performing the role of dean for four years, and surprisingly, that training had been provided by foreign embassies in Libya, rather than their university or any government agency, so there was no sense in which it had been tailored to the specific situation of leading in academia, and indeed it came very much after the deans had been placed in the Incumbency stage. That said, the participants who had experienced an early career in industry had been exposed to some generic leadership training which they saw as a distinct benefit. It is clear from this scenario that Libyan HE does not acknowledge the need for, or value of leadership training, which is indeed a failing since as just mentioned, those with some knowledge and skill in this area (gained from industry), testified to the advantages it had brought them in their role as dean. However, a potential explanation for the absence of such training can be offered by Hofstede's (1980) ideas on national culture, and particularly by the prevalence for Collectivism and Power Distance in Libya, which as has been discussed already, results in social inequalities that are simply accepted as the norm. The knowledge of the criteria upon which appointments to senior positions are made (through tribal and extended family connections), and the appreciation that the culture legitimises those appointments, means that appointees are considered to be 'leaders' with or without training, so any such opportunities for personal improvement are in reality, perceived as perks of the job. This explains why, when they have been provided, they have occurred several years after appointment.

It is clear, nonetheless, that the changing roles and responsibilities experienced by all deans, do impact substantially on their professional identities, and in these circumstances, deans must develop multiple, and flexible identities, or what Clegg (2008) refers to as 'hybrid' identities which have their foundation in generic, cross-disciplinary, and cross-university experiences, as opposed to identities based on the traditional beliefs of discipline-specific academic work. This observation makes the case for university-wide training of all those in leadership positions, but particularly for deans since individual HEIs will require them to demonstrate more or less managerial expertise depending on the organisational culture.

Indeed, this was an issue which attracted much comment in the stories told by the participants, with all of them reporting that their focus was not purely on leadership. To some degree, they all functioned as managers of people and resources. However, differences were evident. In the UK, for instance, despite the indication from deans that their roles definitely required both management and leadership skills, and that both are considered vital, and are used in complementary ways (Fullan, 2001; Northouse, 2013), the consensus of opinion was that their role should be one with a heavier leaning towards leadership than management. This was a reflection of their greater enjoyment of the visioning and creative elements of their role. Indeed, the word 'vision' appeared repeatedly in the findings, suggesting the need for a rather special quality. Again, this emphasis can be interpreted in the context of deans being in a constant state of re-configuring their world (Holland et al., 1998) in their interaction with faculty members, and asserting their authority as leaders. UKD3, for instance, used the phrase "constantly looking at the horizon" to describe the means by which s/he tried to predict what a new world will look like, and the phrase "that we can make the most of", as an indication of how best to manage a situation in order to go forward with effective leadership.

Now, those leaders saw themselves more manager-leaders. This perception was purely and simply an outcome of the heavy managerial responsibilities which consumed great amounts of their time and shifted the balance in their daily activities from academic leadership to one of academic management. The volume of routine administrative work was seen to interfere with their self-image as academic leaders, as they felt bogged down with the day-to-day running of the faculty. For instance, UKD4 said: "those things above my desk, they have been sent to me to distribute to my staff. Now actually, that is not a great use of my time because I am behaving like a postman".

In the Libyan situation, there were similar feelings, and despite the agreement among the participants that their role requires management and leadership skills, there was no evidence whatsoever that leadership skills were ever called for since their role was simply one of "implementing the university regulations". This was a comment repeated continually. In this case it can be argued that as all of the Libyan deans had been appointed by authorities in the absence of any proactivity on their part, they would have no genuine understanding of either management or leadership, and may be unable to distinguish between the concepts. What is more likely to ring true in the Libyan scenario is that those appointed to deanships, are simply 'superior', 'in charge' – a concept which is easily understood in relation to the cultural predispositions already discussed of Collectivism, and Power Distance (Hofstede, 1980), which legitimise firstly, the notion that when proposed for any position of authority, a Libyan has no real option but to comply with the wishes of the collective, and that those placed under the authority newly-invested in an individual who is appointed as dean, accept that a distance between them and the dean has become appropriate through that authority/power. Furthermore, the highly rule-governed nature of Libyan organisations (referred to repeatedly as heavily centralised and bureaucratic) reflects the national cultural disposition for Uncertainty Avoidance (Hofstede, 1980) which does not encourage any form of innovation as would be expected from a visionary leader. Consequently, 'leaders' in the form of deans, are much more likely to be concerned with ensuring that the existing rules and regulations are complied with rather than with curriculum development in response to environmental stimuli.

Clearly, the opportunities for academic leadership were greater in the UK situation, but it is undoubtedly the case that both sets of senior leaders were much immersed in managerial duties, yet still retained their identities as leaders, and it is interesting to consider why this might be the case. One possible reason might be that on being appointed to the post of dean, they were all ignorant of the true nature of the post, and that the amount of administrative/management work they were required to perform came as a shock. Indeed, something of this feeling was expressed in comments to the effect that they would quite like a sideways move to rid themselves of the managerial responsibilities. The image of leader was retained because this was a preferred professional identity, yet there were no clear indications of any genuine academic leadership activities being planned or engaged in in the future. For example, when asked

what they actually did as deans, the UK participants made no mention, as might have been expected, of their engagement in curriculum development within their faculties – a clear role for academic leaders. References were made to research but not to how that research feeds into the curriculum, and course updating and general development. And in the Libyan data, there was a strong emphasis on the monitoring role performed in respect of both academic and non-academic staff, examinations, results, transcripts, and in holding regular meetings, and applying the university regulations and policies. These descriptions of the job reveal that the deans were not leading in any academic way, but rather were simply responding to requests for resources from staff in the various departments within their faculties. This is a management activity, in which they were seen to manage the work of other academics, rather than to perform the role of academic leader, which implies leading the academic direction of the faculty.

It is necessary to point out, however, that the two constructs of management and leadership have mainly been conceptualised and discussed in literature that has emerged from Western writers, and that clarity between these is still very much lacking in regions and countries where the culture is markedly different on some key dimensions, which embody ideas of empowerment in terms of the leadership of a group of academics into a new area of study/knowledge. The impact of such differences can clearly prevent individuals in such cultural environments from ever considering the possibility that they might 'lead' in this way since over-centralisation prevents decisions of this nature being devolved to this level.

However, regardless of how the two samples perceived the management and leadership concepts and hence, their professional identity, it was clear that societal factors seemed to have played a greater role in shaping the Libyan leaders' professional identities than had been the case with the UK deans, and this might suggest that the Libyans' 'figured worlds' contained certain oppressive features. LD6 articulated this in his comment that "It is the nature of Libyan society, and its corrupt and unstable political system that has played a vital role in shaping my professional identity".

The literature relating to professional identity is clear that the self-image is determined directly by one's environment, and implicitly culture, and that the majority of what is known about the self is derived from others (Stets and Burke, 2003; Mead and Morris, 1934). In this respect, there was an over-riding theme in both sets of data that the

'others' in their environment do consider senior leaders to be extremely important for the organisation, and indeed that they are highly respected in their faculties.

For some in the UK sample, this increased respect was apparent in a change of attitude from previous colleagues upon their assumption of the dean's post. For instance, UKD1 said "people have known me for a long time but I suddenly found myself a dean, and I noticed people's attitude towards me changed". Similarly, UKD4 told of how staff had stopped telephoning her/him and used email because they felt s/he had become important and did not want to disturb her/him, thereby reflecting a new positioning within the 'figured world' which serves as the context for the new professional identity as academic leader to surface and be moulded (Gee, 2000), and for the old one to evaporate.

From these two comments it is obvious that being appointed to a more authoritative position had taken the deans away from their previous responsibilities and given them new ones, resulting in a new perception of their professional identity by others who had once been their 'equal'. With the elevation to the position of dean, and newly-formalised boss-subordinate relationships, an additional layer of respect and distance emerged due to the legitimate authority invested in the role (Hofstede, 2001). Furthermore, the presence of Individualism (Hofstede, 1980) in UK society, which encourages personal advancement and achievement also suggests that previous colleagues would accept the appointment as deserving, since where promotions and appointments are made on the basis of suitability for the post as usually happens in individualistic societies, where there is competition for jobs, individuals bear much less grudge than occurs when posts are filled on the basis of favouritism. Consequently, there is the potential for subordinates to be more respectful of those who have 'earned' their positions since greater connotations of 'fairness' are implied. At the same time, however, it cannot be denied that staff might consider pragmatics, as well as or instead of fairness in the appointment system, when showing support for their dean, because of the dean's ability to look favourably on their resource requests and to grant permissions for new academic developments. Deans are, therefore, at least in the UK scenario, considered as occupying positions of power, and as being able to assist staff in securing their personal ambitions by allocating funding to new academic projects.

In the Libyan case, the staff lower down the hierarchy also believe the senior leader's

role to be important, considering it as one that confers power, authority, and prestige. They believe that deans are authorised to "pass a law" (LD5), which indicates the level of power staff attribute to deans. However, based on my own experience as a dean, and on the descriptions given by the participants of what they actually do (implement university regulations), and the high degree of centralisation characterising their organisations, this could be a mistaken perception of staff. However, the cultural predispositions among Libyans for people within particular ranks to keep distance from those in superior ranks (Hofstede, 1980) can in part account for such erroneous assumptions, since their notions of what superiors actually can and cannot do is pure supposition and not the outcome of direct communication.

This separation of the ranks was also seen in both sets of data in respect of the perception by top management of the role of dean. Often, those in the higher echelons of university structures, have occupied the position of dean at some point in their own academic careers, and have some appreciation of what deans do. UKD2, for example states that "most deputy vice chancellors have been deans previously, so they have some understanding". That said, others believed that in being elevated to top management, some ex-deans became hierarchical and failed to offer support. UKD4 for example, felt this lack of support, and said: "I don't think that I have that approach (being hierarchical) towards people and I would like not to have that approach". Similarly, UKD1 saw her/himself as just another individual who had taken on board some extra responsibilities. It was clear from these responses that they had adopted a non-hierarchical stance in their relationships with subordinates, quite possibly the result of the low Power Distance ranking accorded to UK society (Hofstede, 1980). It could also be that despite moving into a different social world, the deans believed that their interaction with their old colleagues had not changed in character, although the structural differences brought about by their new positions must have had some effect, not least because the old colleagues themselves saw that.

Without doubt, the findings confirm that the professional identities of all the participants were developed as a result of historical biography and professional experience, which combined to promote multiple, and flexible identities (Clegg, 2008). This seemed to be a happy outcome since it provided meaning and guidance to their behaviour. For instance, UKD6 said:

> "I think of myself as a researcher, that would be my professional identity and I think of myself as a research leader ... You sometimes

> talk to people in other institutions and expectations of the role of the associate dean of research ... you know this would be very sharp-suited, usually middle-aged, usually quiet, and very much the provost, the dean, the senior administrator. So when people find out that I am an associate dean and an active researcher, they find that quite difficult to understand. Identity certainly comes from continuing to publish and continuing to be thought of as a leading researcher as well as a leader of research" (UKD6).

This comment from UKD6 is an interesting one since it embraces the important aspect of what the role of dean is perceived to be by the social world in which the dean operates, and the equally important aspect of the fluidity in the role which can be brought to it by the proactivity of the role incumbent. Clearly in the Incumbency stage, UKD6 has forged the role s/he wants, including within it multiple role identities (researcher and research leader). This individual is precise in describing her/himself as an academic first, and then as a leader of academics. Additionally, UKD6 acknowledges the expectation of the role by academia in the wider sense, suggesting this to be one of senior administrator, but is quick to point out that this is not how s/he is prepared to operate. UKD6 does without doubt, have a keen sense of self-awareness and of how s/he is perceived, and expected to operate by others, but it is obvious that s/he brings to the role exactly the identity s/he wants.

The idea that the role incumbent has the ability and power to do this is also echoed by another UK dean (UKD3), who said: "I think professional identity should move with time and you have got to adapt it to what is happening around you". This suggests that in establishing her/his professional identity, a dean responds to the whole range of work-related experiences, including the expectations of the role as voiced by others. However, not all participants recognised this response as volitional, since UKD1 believed s/he simply reacted to the work, saying: "I did not decide to have this or be this. It is more or less the impact of working".

There was a strong similarity within the Libyan data, since it was a common desire among some deans to retain their academic identity whilst in the role of dean, and to accept that at the same time they must also demonstrate a professional image of being both manager and leader. For instance, LD4 said:

> "I always wanted to stay current in my field because most of my life I have been connected to education. This is part of my identity and I

> don’t want to lose it. But at the same time, I cannot ignore my identity as a manager/leader”.

However, a new trend was identified by LD3, who expressed some regret that more recently some of his academic identity had been lost, as the nature of the institution was changing to adapt to new appointees from industry who bring a different, industrial culture and identity with them, and either find it difficult or are reluctant to change to the academic culture. The outcome of this seems to be some cultural drift in both directions, thereby diluting the strongly academic identity previously held by deans. This notion of cultural drift is taken up in the next section which draws together the essential differences between the data from both sets of deans.

5.4 Comparison and Differences between the UK and Libyan Senior Leaders

Having discussed all the findings in light of the different theoretical dimensions – leadership stages, life history, national culture, and professional identity through the figured worlds concept, it is apparent that some differences exist in the data, which mean that the professional identities of the UK and Libyan deans, are not the same. However, it is also clear that the differences are entirely due to cultural variations since both sets of deans could be seen to pass through the same leadership stages, had similar stories to tell when relating their life histories, and arrived at their professional identities through the same mechanisms.

Specifically, therefore, the differences between them can be seen as emanating from three major dimensions of national culture, these being: collectivism/individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. Moreover, these cultural predispositions result in the differences as follows:

Appointment to Dean: In the UK, the appointment of senior leaders is theoretically by open competition and on fitness for the job as determined by sufficient qualifications and experience in academia. The experience in academia is usually gained by rising through the ranks which provide individuals with different types of leadership experience (module leader, year tutor, programme leader, etc.). Of course, there are exceptions but the evidence from this study is that all the deans in the research sample found their way to their current positions by gaining appropriate experience, and hence they saw themselves as deserving of the role of dean. In Libya, the appointment of

senior leaders is determined by various authorities including those outside of the university, and the criteria for appointment are associated with tribal and political affiliation. The route to deanship is not through rising up the ranks and therefore, individuals become deans with no leadership experience in academia, and often because of societal pressure to accept the posts. This essential difference is the result of a high degree of collectivism in Libya precipitating the expectation to comply with the wishes of the tribe and society generally, and a high degree of power distance in Libya which legitimises social inequalities that place people in leadership positions on grounds other than merit. In the UK, the high degree of individualism, and low degree of power distance work to foster the opposite situation.

Professional Identity: In the UK and Libya alike, deans have multiple identities but there is a spectrum with UK deans having more identities than Libyan deans, who see themselves as being little more than administrators, ensuring that university policy and regulations are followed. They do not identify any room for genuine academic activity and are resentful of this as whilst they want to be academic leaders, in practice they are not, and their professional identity is that of academic manager with little opportunity for academic research. UK deans enjoy greater empowerment and whilst also being overloaded with managerial responsibilities, do have more opportunity to mould the role of dean to include more research and envisioning of the direction of the faculty. This essential difference is the result of all three cultural predispositions identified as being low in the UK, and high in Libya, i.e., collectivism/individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. The high scores on power distance, and uncertainty avoidance evident in Libyan culture result in universities being highly bureaucratic organisations which function in a heavily centralised manner, through structures which are strongly hierarchical. Individuals, including deans, know their place in the ranks, do what their superiors and subordinates expect of them, and follow rules to avoid having to take difficult decisions. They have little personal empowerment, and the highly politicised environment in which Libyan HE operates must not be overlooked because a dean who steps out of line will have penalties to pay. The high scores on individualism and low scores on power distance and uncertainty avoidance noted in UK culture result in deans having more authority to manoeuvre within the hierarchical structure of the university, and to shape their roles such that the bias towards management is less evident than in Libyan universities, and there are opportunities to assume a professional identity which is more comprehensive.

A common feature in both the UK and Libyan data is the feeling of disappointment at not being able to pursue the academic leadership role to the extent that deans would like, in which respect it can be asserted that all participants experience some degree of disenchantment. Moreover, it can also be logically argued that all participants have an idea of what academic leadership should entail, and implicitly that is not the huge amount of administrative work which is precisely what causes the disenchantment. This is an interesting finding, especially for the Libyan deans since it does signal that even in a society where centralisation and bureaucracy in academia are strong, there does remain an expectation among those given 'leadership' positions, that they can exercise some degree of power in determining the direction of their faculties.

5.5 Conclusion to the Chapter

This chapter has considered the findings from the study in the light of the literature relating to leadership stages, life history, national culture, and professional identity. It has done this by addressing the two research questions established in Chapter One, and which have allowed for a detailed investigation of how deans construct their professional identity, and what that identity is in the case of UK and Libyan deans. The variations in this respect have been highlighted.

In respect of the variations, it has been shown that culture underpins the predispositions brought to the academic enterprise by the two sets of deans, and in an attempt to isolate what particular aspects of culture are responsible, the framework produced by Hofstede (1980) has been used. That choice was made on the basis that it is the only conceptual model that specifically includes an analysis of the Libyan culture and the UK culture, using the same variables, and keeping the organisational context constant. Moreover, the span of the other nation states involved in that study enable the findings relating to the Libyan cultural dispositions to be situated within the broader context of the Arab World of which Libya is a member, and the broader context of the Western World of which the UK is a part. Clearly, the potential for cultural drift is great in times of technological advancement, and as a result of the globalisation phenomenon, which has embodied substantial efforts on the part of many nations to send selected individuals overseas to more 'developed' environments for higher education. However, the history of Libya during the 40 years of the Gadafi regime show the country to have been relatively 'closed' and the removal of English from all educational curricula by that

regime have without doubt, served to prevent the cultural drift that could have rendered the findings of Hofstede in 1980 inappropriate in the twenty first century. Furthermore, the recent conceptual model of Holland et al. (1998), used to explore the notion of professional identity is heavily reliant upon sociological underpinnings, and these are not novel. Rather, they can be traced back to the very beginning of the twentieth century with the work of what later became the Chicago School of thought. These ideas have also not changed.

The findings of this study can, therefore, robustly show that cultural differences along the lines discussed, underpin the way that both sets of deans perform. Society impinges less on UK deans than it does on Libyan deans, and consequently, they are freer, and implicitly enjoy more academic freedom than their Libyan counterparts, although in the current educational and economic climate, exactly what academic freedom entails is another issue for debate.

Moreover, what can be learned from the study is that as society plays a greater role in directing individuals in Libya than is the case in the UK, and that Libyan society is currently in shreds after the 2011 revolution, there is not likely to be any improvement in Libyan HE in the foreseeable future. The continuing dangerous situation in the country, and the ongoing presence of militia activity and general lawlessness, is in fact, likely to persuade many with academic leadership potential to look elsewhere to satisfy their aspiring professional identity.

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter brings the thesis, and the research project to a close. It shows how the research aim and the five objectives associated with that, as indicated in Chapter One, have been achieved. This is done in Section 6.2 entitled Overall Conclusions. From that the chapter then proceeds in Section 6.3 to offer some recommendations for more effective senior academic leadership. Whilst it was not stated as a study aim, the presentation of recommendations is a natural outcome of the discovery of certain problems that may respond to particular action, and thus be alleviated to the betterment of the deans' capability to discharge the role of senior academic leader. Section 6.4 documents the contribution to knowledge and practice made by the research. This is followed by Section 6.5 that addresses the limitations inherent within the study, and Section 6.6 that seeks to show how such limitations might be remedied through further research. It makes suggestions for research activities that could, therefore, enhance the contribution to knowledge made by this study. Finally, the study ends with Section 6.7 that gives a personal perspective on the part of the researcher as to the value of the research to himself and his country.

For ease of reference, the aim and objectives of the study as documented in Chapter One, are reproduced here.

The overall aim of the study is to conduct a comparative examination of how senior academic leaders, and in particular deans, from the two different cultural contexts of Libya and the UK, develop their identity as leaders, and discharge their roles. The five specific objectives associated with this overarching aim are:

1. To explore the literature relating to leadership with a view to determining the factors and personal characteristics that are influential in producing effective leaders.
2. To explore empirically, the extent to which the life history of senior academic leaders in Libyan and UK universities influences the way they develop leadership skills and eventually lead.
3. To determine what senior academic leaders actually do in Libyan and

UK universities, and the extent to which those leaders are satisfied with their role.

4. To establish differences between the level of preparation, and therefore, effectiveness in respect of senior academic leaders in Libyan and UK universities.
5. To establish how the professional identity of senior academic leaders in Libyan and UK universities emerges, and what influences are brought to bear on this identity by life history, and national culture.

6.2 Overall Conclusion

The first objective, that being *to explore the literature relating to leadership with a view to determining the factors and personal characteristics that are influential in producing effective leaders*, has been achieved by a review of the literature, and particularly that on educational leadership in order to contextualise the data subsequently gathered from the two research samples. That literature was seen to continually use the word 'management', suggesting that when referring to leadership in the academic environment, there is a conceptual link between the two activities, referred to in organisational terms. That said, the literature also contains criticism of the idea that leadership and management are interchangeable concepts (Foster, 1989), although this view can be argued as one that reflects a time past – a time which no longer exists because of wholesale changes in universities that have demanded greater managerialism and hence, managerial duties and skills of leaders. Whatever, the actuality of the situation now, it is accepted that leaders do engage in management, and that the two concepts remain in some way related, possibly always in dynamic tension with each other, but nonetheless both necessary in organisations (Creaby, 2016). In respect of the antecedents of effective leaders, the literature reveals the importance of experience of leadership roles and the need for leadership training. Clearly also, if in the academic environment, leaders are performing managerial roles, then management skills too are required. Good communication, interactive skills, organisational skills, ability to delegate and negotiate, and the ability to inspire others to follow the lead are all implied.

The second objective, that being *to explore empirically, the extent to which the life history of senior academic leaders in Libyan and UK universities influences the way they develop leadership skills and eventually lead*, has been achieved through the

interviews with twelve deans in the two universities in the sample, and asking for their life stories. In this connection, it was established that life history was indeed influential in the case of the deans participating in the study, with each one coming from a family that cherished education as a vehicle for aspiring to a better life, and implicitly as a means of raising one's status. Such ideas were seen as the bedrock of early leadership ambitions, and certain life experiences in supervisory or leadership positions whether as teenagers or young adults in their first employment posts, were reported as influential in shaping leadership skills and styles, serving as examples of good and bad practice to be embraced or rejected. Additionally, where the life history included formal leadership training, this was perceived as being highly influential.

The third objective, that being *to determine what senior academic leaders actually do in Libyan and UK universities, and the extent to which those leaders are satisfied with their role*, has also been achieved through the interviews with the two groups of deans, by asking them specifically what their role entails. Both samples confirmed that the dean's role is one embodying both leadership and management activities, but without exception all reported their frustration with the balance as the leadership aspects of their role were subordinated to the management dimensions. This pattern was somewhat less obvious in the UK scenario, as the political landscape is very different from that in Libya, has been so for a long time, and remains so. Libya's political leadership up to the 2011 Revolution had eradicated all notions of 'leadership' as invested in individuals, and for many years, academic literature from the West was not available to Libyans as the teaching of English had been dropped in a political move, with the result that Libyan deans had no ability to read leadership literature, and thus, no real concept of what it meant to be an academic leader. In terms of satisfaction with the role of dean, in addition to mentioning being over-burdened with managerial tasks, several said they would accept a sideways move if offered a post with less management responsibility, and others said they would not be interested in leadership posts further up the university hierarchy as they were looking to retire. These comments confirm indirectly, the lack of satisfaction with the role.

The fourth objective, that being *to establish differences between the level of preparation, and therefore, effectiveness in respect of senior academic leaders in Libyan and UK universities,* was achieved by asking deans particularly what formal training they had received for their posts, and by considering this together with the data gathered in relation to Objective 2, regarding life history. It was seen that UK deans had

been better in their level of preparation for the dean's position, and by implication were able to perform more effectively than their Libyan counterparts. To be specific, UK deans had risen through the ranks, serving an apprenticeship almost, and taking on board lesser leadership roles associated with academic life, e.g., module leaders, year tutors, and programme leaders. This trajectory embodied a gradual accumulation of leadership experience that in some cases was accompanied by attendance at formal leadership initiatives. Libyan deans on the other hand, did not all serve this 'apprenticeship' and hence, missed out on the experience of learning the 'leadership ropes'. Several were placed in their positions as dean after a very short space of time in actual teaching, during which no opportunities had presented themselves for leadership positions. There was no formal or informal leadership training provided to Libyan deans before appointment or indeed after, with just one exception and that was really by chance, and not provided by the university.

The fifth objective, that being *to establish how the professional identity of senior academic leaders in Libyan and UK universities emerges, and what influences are brought to bear on this identity by life history, and national culture*, was achieved by asking the interviewees questions about their professional identities, and how they believed these had been developed. The life histories as narrated by the interviewees provided rich data that were subsequently analysed using the tripartite theoretical framework of life history, national culture, and figured worlds. It was clear that professional identity emerged as a result of all the experiences deans had accumulated in their lives, that it was socially constructed, and indeed still ongoing.

Having shown that the five objectives, and therefore the aim of the study have been achieved, it is important to draw an overall conclusion. Not to run the risk of repetition of the findings and the discussion in the previous chapter, that overall conclusion is concise.

The aim of the study was *to conduct a comparative examination of how senior academic leaders, and in particular deans, from the two different cultural contexts of Libya and the UK, develop their identity as leaders, and discharge their roles.* Essentially, the conclusion drawn is that these senior leaders begin to develop ideas about leadership in their formative years, although at that time they may not realise that this is what is happening. Nonetheless, they are capable in some way, and through the adoption of minor roles organising or directing the work of others, they acquire

confidence and skills of persuasion. With such confidence they embark on careers which ultimately take them to the dean's position, whether those careers are lifelong experiences in academia, or begin in industry where other contributory experience is gained. So life history plays its part in developing identity as leaders. However, each individual's life history is a complex phenomenon and within that, the influence of national culture is paramount since the predispositions to behave in a certain way as a leader, and towards a leader do, at the same time, affect that way an individual discharges the role of leader once occupying it. Consequently, the role is accepted and played out against a backdrop of cultural, and implicitly, social, expectation.

6.3 Recommendations for More Effective Senior Academic Leadership

What emerges from the conclusions is a need for potential senior academic leaders (deans), and universities to be aware of five major points, although these differ in the two different cultural environments of the UK and Libya.

1. Despite the research being conducted in two very different cultural and political contexts, there is agreement among the participants that they had all enjoyed a degree of success in the role of dean, irrespective of whether they had purposefully applied for this, or been placed in it having been pressured to do so by others. This element of success testifies to the fact that the dean's role is a sophisticated one entailing a variety of tasks, the discharge of which presents those in the position with a genuine personal and professional developmental opportunity. Participants confirmed this in several ways, mentioning that they had 'gained knowledge', 'made a contribution', 'could give even more in another similar or more senior leadership role'. Hence, it is not an opportunity to be rejected without contemplating the potential benefits.
2. The notion of dean (senior academic leader) in today's university has evolved from that of twenty years ago, such that there is no limit to the amount of work expected of the role. Certainly, in Libya, the role is one of management and does not embody any power to lead a faculty in an academic direction as the degree of centralisation, and the continuous change in regulations, are oppressive and prohibit initiative in the realms of curriculum advancement. In the UK, there is still the opportunity to engage in academic leadership in the role of dean, but this

takes careful time- and work-management on the part of the individual, as the job is characterised by a greater degree of managerialism than in the past.

3. The notion of accountability is greater in the Libyan situation than in the UK scenario, since Libyan deans are usually placed in their positions for political reasons and whether they want the post of dean or not, there are societal expectations of how they will perform. This is a source of pressure for Libyan deans, and should be borne in mind both for appointees, and university top managers when making appointment decisions. It should also be borne in mind that in the aftermath of the 2011 Revolution, Libyan infrastructure and society remains in shreds, and that all positions of responsibility and so-called leadership are difficult to perform well as there is a shortage of general resources, and the need to use one's personal connections to underpin the academic enterprise is very real.
4. The lack of preparation for the leadership aspect of deanship is another important issue in the Libyan context, although the UK deans also raised the desirability of more ongoing training initiatives. Clearly, universities should devote attention and resources to properly equipping deans with the required skills to lead, and should recognise that leadership training and professional development go hand in hand. Professional development via attendance at seminars, professional association meetings, conferences, etc., must be supported as this overall effort serves to enhance deans' professional identities. And formal training should be more specific and related to deans' particular faculties so they can see the relevance, and thus obtain better outcomes from the training.
5. The role of dean whether characterised as leader, manager, leader-manager, or manager-leader, provides a bridge between top academic leaders in an institution, and those lower down the scale, for example, Heads of Department. Consequently, the role requires an extremely good communicator who must be prepared to function as an intermediary.

6.4 Contribution to Knowledge and Understanding

The study has had several valuable outcomes, leading to new knowledge, and implications for both practitioners and researchers. In Chapter One it was noted that a

contribution to the literature was envisaged in three major areas, and indeed the study has produced findings which have brought that prediction to fruition.

The very specific focus on how academic leaders learn to lead has been pursued in two different cultural contexts, and the knowledge of how the professional identities of those leaders were constructed has illuminated the impacts of cultural, political, and social factors.

Consequently, it can be seen that the study makes a significant contribution to the literature relating to Libyan HE. That literature in itself is not vast, but the literature relating to the post-Revolution (2011) environment is almost non-existent. Six year on, Libya remains in a confused state, civil unrest is rife, personal security is challenged every day and it is simply not safe to conduct research that requires travelling, or the exploration of sensitive issues. At the same time, there is no real willingness among the Libyan population to participate in research for fear of some form of reprisal from others who do not share the views expressed. This study is, therefore, a valuable and unique contribution to the sparse literature pertaining to Libyan HE.

Simultaneously, the study contributes to the wider body of writing concerning academic leadership in other Arab and Islamic societies since they share many of the cultural and religious features that characterise Libya. This means that the study's outcomes have meaning for the wider literature of the Arab World pertaining to Higher Education, and the route to leadership, and the individual professional identity of those in leadership positions.

And a third contribution comes in the study's relevance to the very large body of literature concerning academic leadership in the West, through its focus on the UK sample. In this respect, the contribution is seen in the changing nature of the role of dean, from one which was originally that of academic leadership, to one that is now much more managerial and less satisfying.

The study also makes a methodological contribution which other researchers may find useful in that the theoretical framework developed – career stages, national culture, and professional identity through social construction – can be seen as a logical and workable conceptual model for interpreting the behaviour of academic leaders in all communities, societies, and culture. The framework's three-dimensional approach leads to an emphasis on ethnography and that makes it suitable as a model in all cultural contexts.

Finally, the study makes a contribution to the knowledge possessed by practitioners in the form of university higher managements, since it generates recommendations and advice concerning how leadership, especially in Libyan HEIs, can be improved. It highlights the cultural constraints within which Libyan deans operate and whilst not seeking to denigrate those aspects of Libyan culture that are seen to cause problems for deans, it does offer guidance to ameliorate their effects.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

As with all studies, this one has some limitations and it is necessary to highlight these in the interests of identifying where future researchers can improve upon it.

One very important limitation is the current state of Libya, six years on from the 2011 Revolution. People in Libya are in general, are afraid to give opinions, unsure of where their opinions may be reported, and what repercussions might occur for themselves and their families. This is a very real threat, and it has precluded the development of academic literature as it has done much to dissuade participation in research by academics, and Libyans generally. Consequently, there has been no published work about the Libyan situation on which to draw, and the study in Libya has been exploratory, grounded to some extent by the UK sample which has not been affected by such environmental pressures.

Of necessity, therefore, the study has been small scale, involving six deans from one Libyan university that was accessible to the researcher. This leads to the argument that generalisation to other universities within Libya cannot be inferred, especially as the researcher was an insider, and may have been treated differently by participants as a result. However, given that national culture and the role of society in the construction of professional identity, have served as part of the theoretical framework for data analysis, it can be inferred that the same cultural dispositions, and the influences of politics and society do apply throughout Libya, and on those grounds, it is suggested that the issue of a small sample is not a problem.

Nonetheless, a bigger questions remains, which is the extent to which the very special situation applying to Libya, of forty years of one particular political regime which largely isolated the country from the international stage, and steered its development in a way slightly different from that of other Arab countries, has created a very specific

and unique culture, different from that now prevailing in the wider Middle East, and if this is the case, then another framework for cultural analysis to support that generated by Hofstede's may have been useful. This is an issue for future research to determine as indicated in the following section.

Another limitation relates to the theoretical framework which through its use of the life history approach, left it up to the participants to tell their stories. This was a purposeful strategy, aimed at encouraging the sharing of information, and one particularly suited to the Libyan deans. However, a more structured approach addressing very specific points relating to leadership and management might have produced more detail concerning certain aspects of the dean's role. Nevertheless, it is believed that the methodology chosen was the very best in the circumstances, and has left the way open for further research.

6.6 Suggestions for Further Research

Leading on from the identified limitation of the small numbers involved in this study, it is suggested that the study be replicated with a larger sample, and that the sample be drawn from more than one other university in Libya in the interests of establishing the reliability of the current study's outcomes across the country. Given the difficulties of travel and access, such a study may have to involve a research collaborator at each university who can feed the data to a single research co-ordinator.

It is also thought appropriate to repeat the study restricting the sample to female leaders in both Libya and the UK, as there were no female participants among the Libyan sample, and the UK sample was mixed. Hence, a study controlling for gender would be useful, especially given the strong demarcation of male/female roles in Libya. However, it is recognised that currently, it is very difficult for women to accept any leadership roles in Libya, as it is simply far too dangerous. Research of this nature would, therefore, have to tap into the population of retired women leaders in Libya, and be matched with a group of counterparts in the UK. Insight into the route to academic leadership for Libyan women would be valuable in revealing whether they go through similar stages to men, and whether their experience has the same influence upon them. Additionally, the outcomes of such a study would confirm or reject the assertions regarding the Masculinity/Femininity dimension within Hoftsede's model of national

culture, and show whether society's pressures upon women extend into the workplace to the same degree as they do with men.

Further support or otherwise of Hofstede's assertions about the cultural dispositions of Arab society, and those critics of Hofstede who argue that his data is too old and can be dismissed on the grounds of cultural drift resulting from globalisation, can be gained from a repeat of this study but using different points of comparison. For example, it would be valuable to conduct a comparative study of deans in Libyan, Saudi Arabian, and Emirati universities, as this would produce units of analysis that are extremely conservative on the one hand, but in the case of the Emirates, much more likely to have experienced cultural drift that would have softened some of the sharp distinctions reported by Hofstede on the dimensions of Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Collectivism/Individualism. The issue of tribalism for instance, is not part of Hofstede's thesis but its impacts are extremely visible in the Collectivism dimension, and tribalism has not been eradicated by globalisation. It is an enduring part and parcel of Arab society. A study comparing other Arab countries but using the same methodology as this one would be illuminating.

Research would also be useful into the influence of careers outside of education before taking up a role within academic since there were participants in this study who referred to the experience gained in such circumstances that was subsequently valuable to them as deans. However, the opposite point was made by some of the Libyan deans that academia was being weakened by new educational leaders who had not served their 'apprenticeship' in HE, and who were importing industrial attitudes that influenced their leadership style negatively. The Figured Worlds paradigm of Holland et al. (1998) could be utilised to underpin such a study.

Finally, it is suggested that research into the issue of academic freedom, what this means in the modern university in both a Western and Arab setting, and how it impacts on the performance of deans and the overall quality of HE, be undertaken. The findings from this study reveal that UK deans enjoy more of this ingredient than their Libyan peers, and this results in greater satisfaction with their role.

6.7 Personal Note

At the end of this research study, it is important for me to say that the effort began as a means to several ends – to more personal knowledge which I hoped to make use of for the good of Libyan HE, to a PhD qualification that I believed would sustain my position in Libyan HE and allow me to embark on yet further post-doctoral engagement with the issue of academic leaders and professional identities, and of course to the development of a new body of literature charting the overall development of my country after the 2011 Revolution – the Arab Spring.

During the study, those three wide motivations were supplemented with a more detailed and specific one, that being to agitate for proper leadership training and support for deans in Libyan universities, and as a practical outcome, I believe this is something that must now be a priority for me, within the resources available and the constraints that still prevail in Libya.

Moreover, the immersion in the life history approach has provoked greater personal reflection on my own career journey, to which I now add the experience of researcher. Undertaking research in an extremely unstable country has been a baptism of fire that I believe has equipped me with the resilience to continue as a researcher in difficult environments. For this I am grateful.

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Appendix 1

Letter to Interviewees

Study Information Sheet for Participants

Dear Dean of _____Faculty,

I am a PhD Candidate at Manchester Metropolitan University where I am studying 'How higher education leaders learn to lead and what shapes their professional identities - As a comparison of Libya and the UK'

To help with my study I am asking permission from a number of Deans to interview them about how they come to be a higher education leader and what the role involves. It would be helpful to audio record these interviews so that I can refer to them later on.

I would like to interview you as one of these Deans and if you are happy for me to do so, I would be very grateful if you could sign the attached "Informed Consent Form" in the appropriate places.

There is no obligation to take part and, likewise, if you wish to stop the interview at any point, that too is fine.

One of the questions on the following form is about recording the interview. If you are happy for me to do this, please note that the recording is for my university research only, will be stored securely and in accordance with the Data Protection Act and it will be destroyed after my research thesis is completed. When I refer to data in my written research or include quotations from what participants have said, those participants will be anonymised.

If you are happy to be interviewed on this basis, please answer the questions on the following sheet. If you do not wish to be interviewed or if you have some questions for me, please let me know.

Thank you and regards

Ramadan Alhamroni

Appendix 2

Consent Form

Informed consent form-please complete if you are happy to take part in the study.

Title of Study: How higher education leaders learn to lead and what shapes their professional identities – As a comparison of Libya and the UK

Researcher: **Ramadan Alhamroni**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the "Study Information Sheet for Participants", above. ☐
2. I have spoken to the above researcher and understand that my involvement will involve being interviewed/interviewed and recorded [delete as appropriate] at a time and place to suit me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without prejudice. ☐
4. I understand that any data or information used in any publications which arise from this study will be anonymous. ☐
5. I understand that all data will be stored securely taking account of the data protection act. ☐
6. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Name of Participant Date Signature

Appendix 3

Facts about Libya

Topography

Libya stretches along the northeast coast of Africa between Tunisia and Algeria on the west and Egypt on the east. To the south of Libya are the Sudan, Chad, and Niger. "A glance at the map shows Libya as a vast triangular shape on the southern coast of the central Mediterranean thrusting like a huge wedge deep into the great Sahara desert and lying between latitudes 19 and 33 degrees north and longitudes 10 and 25 degrees east" (Murabet, 1964:9). This observation by Murabet made 50 years ago, holds true today as the territory has undergone no changes in topographical terms in the last half century. It remains as a large country, strategically placed between the Mediterranean countries, the rest of Africa, and the Middle East, and as such has several advantages in respect of trading and communication.

Climate

Along the Mediterranean Sea coast and generally in the coastal lowlands, the summers are warm and the winters are mild, demonstrating a typical southern Mediterranean climate. In the interior desert region, however, there are extremely hot summers and similarly extreme and harsh winters. Given these climatic conditions, the vast majority of Libya's population (80%) is settled in the coastal lowlands, where indeed the major cities of the country are located. Libya experiences very little rain, and agriculture is substantially affected as sufficient rainfall to support agricultural occupations is only received by less than 2% of the country (Metz, 1989).

Size

The surface of Libya is over 679,000 square miles which is equivalent to 1,760,000 square kilometres (Metz, 1989). Libya is considered to be huge in size when compared to its population. It is among the largest four countries in Africa, the seventeenth among the whole world, and seven times the size of the United Kingdom (Ismael et al., 1991). According to the Libyan Statistics Book (2003:20) "the average population density is very low, about 3.20 people per km2. However, the population density varies from one part of the country to another; it is high along the coast, estimated at more

than 2,207 people per km2 in Tripoli and more than 796 in Benghazi, whereas it falls to less than one person per km2 in the interior like El Kufra and Murzuq". Appendix 4 shows the map of Libya along with its surrounding countries.

Population

According to The World Factbook, (2011), the population of Libya is 6.4 million. The General Census of Population in Libya figures for 1984, 1995 and 2006, show a significant increase in the population. In 1984, the number of people was 3,231,059 and the annual growth rate was 4.21%. By 1995, this had increased to 4,389,739 and the annual growth rate was 2.86%, and the figures recorded in 2006 revealed that the population reached 5,323,991 with an annual growth rate of 1.83%. Most of the Libyan population live in the north of the country particularly in Tripoli in the west, the capital of Libya and the biggest city, and in Benghazi in the east, the second biggest city in Libya.

Languages and Ethnic Groups

Arabic is the official language of the country. However, not surprisingly, given the various foreign occupations of Libya, other languages such as English, French, and Italian also became widely spoken in key cities (Metz, 1989). The Berber language is spoken by only a small minority of the population (Metz, 1989). Islam is the official religion and 99% of the population are Muslim, the vast majority belonging to the Sunni Islam sect. The Arab culture and Sunni Islam prevail within the country (Tarhoni, 2011), the Libyan people being mainly a mixture of Arabs and Berbers with little distinction remaining between these two groups, along with small Tabou and Touareg tribal groups in southern Libya.

Appendix 4

Map of Libya

Figure (2): Map of Libya (Source: The World Factbook, 2013)

Appendix 5

Interview Questions

Research Question 1: How does life history affect academic leadership?

Formative years

Could you tell me about your formative years in terms of:

- Parental/relatives influence
- Education
- Important people/critical incidents
- Leadership roles
- Learning anything which affects your leadership behaviour now

Career and leadership roles

Could you tell me about your career development and leadership roles in terms of:

- Motivations
- Important people/critical incidents
- Formal leadership training
- Learning anything which affects your leadership behaviour now

Future plans

Do you have plans to change your position/aspire to higher leadership, and if so, are you preparing for this in any way (for example, is there any specific type of training and education you are pursuing or think you require)?

Research Question 2: What shapes the professional identity of senior academic leaders?

- What is involved in being a dean?
- How do deans perceive themselves?
- How do deans perceive others?